

S E R M O N S

ON EVERY

S U N D A Y

In the Y E A R.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

By F. BL. TH, DISC. CAR.—S. T. P.

V O L U M E I.

For the First and Second Quarter of the ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.



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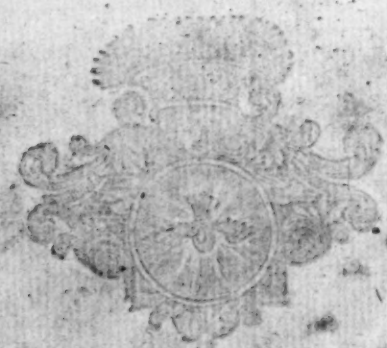
STUDY

IN THE

TWO VOLUMES



FOR THE YEAR ENDING 1881



DUBLIN:
BARTHOLOMEW CORCORAN, 10, THE LANE,
MDCCCLXXXI

C O N T E N T S.

S E R M O N I.

On the First SUNDAY in ADVENT.

LUKE xxi. 27, 28.

Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand.

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II. Is inevitable, universal, and public: and

III. Is final, decisive, and admitting no appeal. 2

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SERMON

S E R M O N

ON THE

FIRST SUNDAY in ADVENT.

LUKE xxi. 27, 28.

Then shall they see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. But when these begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads: because your redemption is at hand.

I AM not insensible, BELOVED, how very high the torrent of infidelity runs in this age, but especially in this country; where anarchy presides over persons and things; where all ideas are huddled into uncertainty, and where libertinage is mistaken for liberty, imbecillity of mind for freedom of thought, and the false appearances of truth for truth itself. It is too glaring a fact to doubt of, that the prevailing majority in this misguided land is a set of shallow self-approving wilters, the tenderness of whose intellects, soften'd into impotence by the corruption of a depraved heart, confounds all mystery with imposition, faith with credulity, piety with folly, and religion with slavery. Hence is it, that, unable to distinguish false glory from the true, they seek all their reputation of men of genius in coarsely ridiculing those sacred irrefragable doctrines, which their groveling souls want as much the spirit to practice as the power to reason away. Was it then to this unbelieving herd, that I purpose at present to address my discourse; I should begin at the wrong end, if, before I display the terrors of a general judgment, I did not first establish, with invincible proofs, the certainty of it's future existence. But in a Sermon to you, Christians, the orthodoxy of whose faith renders that easy task a needless one, I should deem it inexcusable tautology to waste words in proving, what is believed and acknowledged.

You are Christians; and therefore must be convinced of a universal resurrection. You are Christians; and therefore must be apprised of the great and dreadful judgment which will tread on the heel of it. And you, all, profess to believe that God himself is the judge who will preside there in person, to try the living and the dead. Tell me however, — what good effect does this con-

viction, this pre-sentiment, this inward belief produce in you? How much better Christians does it make of you than of the most errant sceptics: Or, to speak more justly, how much less criminal does it keep you than the most confirm'd miscreants? What virtues do you practice more than they? And which of their vices are all of you free from, if some of you do not outstrip the worst of them? They (and where is the wonder?) are covetous, haughty, lewd, revengeful, intemperate, slothful in the service of God and void of charity, mercy and justice to their fellow-creatures: But which of you is innocent enough of all these sins to throw the first stone at them? Are not the best of you all eaten up with vanity, self-love, peevishness, lukewarmness in your devotions, and languor in the works of mercy, justice and charity to your neighbours? Yet you believe that you, as well as they, shall one day be summon'd to the tribunal of God; but how is it you do believe? Ah be serious for once, beloved, and dare to be sincere with yourselves. Is your belief no ways a-kin to that of the rebellious spirits, of whom the holy apostle St. James makes mention? The very powers of darkness, as he wisely observes, believe and shudder: But what, alas, does their constrain'd belief or servile fear avail them? And what will any conviction or panic avail you, which, like theirs, is abortive and fruitless? *Thou believest that there is a God, says our apostle, a God who will one day call thee to a severe, public, minute account of all thy actions, words, and even thoughts; nay omissions too? Thou do'st well: the devils also believe and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?*

Ah dearest fellow-Christians! it is even so. Vain is all your belief to secure you from the fatal consequences which that judgment may be attended with: if you take no pains to be in readiness for it. Useless are all your present terrors, if they are too weak to keep you upon your guard against future ones. And yet is not this the case with many of you? Have you yet made any preparation for your safety in that great and terrible Day? Have you

ever consider'd it in a truly serious light? Surely it is impossible. Surely you have never weigh'd the material circumstances attending it; or you, who profess yourselves Catholics, *that is*, faithful followers of a crucified Christ, and sharers with him in the sufferings and humiliation of his cross; you, I say, would never copy, as too many of you do, the dissolute manners of those, who either own him not at all, or own him only to aggravate their guilt in disobeying him. **THE HOLY GHOST** by the pen of *Ecclesiasticus* tells you, that the bare reflection on your latter end is sufficient to deter you from every crime: *Remember your last things and you will never sin.* If this be so, beloved, as after such authority we cannot doubt it to be; whence comes it, that you both believe and tremble at this your last great affair, and yet sin on with the same freedom as if you actually doubted of, nay absolutely disbelieved, it? You know that the issue of this important crisis is nothing less than unending happiness or never-ceasing misery. Can you then be indifferent whether you shall be eternally happy or eternally wretched? No: That, I presume, is not your case. Eternal felicity is what you all sigh after, even while you turn your backs upon it. But a dreadful illusion has seized fast hold of many of you, and detains you in a deplorable suspense between false fear and mistaken security. The all-venturing insolence of your fears keeps some of you from reflecting on the danger you are exposed to: And the cowardly boldness of presumption makes others of you consider that danger as less important, less certain, and farther off than it really is. And therefore you make yourselves easy by avoiding to dwell on a subject which must shock your imaginations. So that you gratify your passions with any pleasures which you look upon to be certain, because within your present reach, buoy'd up with the delusive hopes of escaping those terrors which your corrupted fancy places at the remotest distance, to give them the greater air of uncertainty. But give me leave, dear brethren, to undeceive you. If I disturb your present tranquillity, by awaking you from the pleasing fatal dream you are in, it is only to provide for your future security. There are many and weighty reasons, why you ought to use your utmost endeavours to be undeceived: Reasons, however, which you will never sufficiently comprehend till you are thoroughly roused. Let it suffice then for the present to tell you that your eternal salvation or perdition absolutely depends upon the good or bad state you will be found in at the day of judgment: The natural consequence of which is, that it is an affair of the highest moment to you all to live in a perpetual preparation for this awful judgment. And now to set this infallible truth in the clearest light, and to remove from your

minds every pre-possession, which stands between you and evidence, it will be proper to examine into the principal circumstances attending the dreadful scrutiny in question: Which I shall do by considering it under these general heads.

First, As nigh at hand, precarious, and terrible.

Secondly, As inevitable, universal, and public: and

Thirdly, As final, decisive, and admitting no appeal.

"O crisis! Nice important crisis, on which a whole eternity depends! What great and weighty stakes are trusted to thy doubtful issue? Dread Arbiter of that last solemn period! Take pity, while there is yet a time for pity on this thy chosen people, dismay'd with fruitless apprehensions of thy future judgment and approaching wrath. O graciously remove all servile terrors from us, and only give us such a holy fear as grateful love creates, which, keeping us from giving thee offence while thou art still our Saviour, may leave us nought to fear but all to hope when thou shalt come our judge to try the world by fire. So when we see Thee, Lord, *the Son of Man, coming in a cloud with great power and majesty*, With joy shall we look up, with joy lift up our heads, to see that our Redemption is at hand."

This joy however is not to be obtain'd but by a previous taste of sorrow. If you will *reap*, Christians; you must resolve to *sow*. The seed of a joyful hope is a sorrowful sedateness. *They who sow in tears shall reap in joy*, says the Psalmist. The way then to lift up your heads, at the second coming of your Lord with joyful hopes of your approaching redemption, is to depress them at present with apprehension of his coming upon you unawares, ere you are prepared against the terrors which will accompany his judgment: This however you will never do, unless you often refresh your memories with a recollection of the principal circumstances of it.

I. The JUDGMENT of GOD then, Beloved, is nigh at hand, is precarious, and terrible. It is *nigh at hand*: For the nature of things assures us it cannot be otherwise: A variety of concurring signs prove it to be so: And God's eternal truth tells us it is so.

All the works of nature are alike perishable beings which, beginning from the imperfect, tend to perfection only to ripen into decay. And the down-hill race they run from maturity to dissolution is lively depicted to us in that miniature of created instability, the rose; which is some months acquiring the bloom of a single day: And the gay morning

morning which shews it in the zenith of it's beauty, is but the immediate harbinger of the night which is to destroy it. The Sybilline prophecies, revered even by the gravest fathers of the church, confine the duration of the world within the parenthesis of six thousand years: According to which computation, if some chronologies be true, we are shutting up that parenthesis with the last century. And what makes this appear the more probable is, that, even in Solomon's days, every thing was come to it's utmost perfection in nature, in arts and in sciences, inasmuch, that, That wisest of men tells us, that there was nothing new under the sun: And all things since then have been visibly upon the decline. The vegetable creation has lost it's virtues in part, or mankind their knowledge of them. The sensitive creatures are no more so robust as we read of old. Mankind itself are notoriously weaken'd in strength, and in numbers, and in length of life. For one who now lives to the common age of our forefathers, thousands die but with half the seeds of life in them: And deaths are remarkably more frequent than births. Even they, who rub on through a half-rotten life to old-age, have neither the sagacity nor knowledge of antiquity. In short, the whole creation has long been visibly upon the wain; it's principles of production seem to be almost exhausted, and the nature of things assures us, that the judgment which must succeed is *nigh at hand*. A farther proof of which is the number of heresies, heresiarchs, infidels and profligates, false christs and lying prophets, all, who have multiplied like locusts within these few years past, and spread their abominations in the holy place of God's church. To which, if we add the frequent eclipses, revolutions of comets and other signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars, the distress of nations throughout the world, with wars and rumours of wars, with sword, with fire, with famines and plagues and earthquakes, which our Saviour has so plainly foretold us of; we cannot well be in our senses and not see, that a variety of concurring signs prove the dreadful period of universal judgment *nigh at hand*. And what is alone sufficient to remove every plea of ignorance is, that God's eternal truth tells us so: *When you shall see these things, says Christ, know ye that it is nigh even at the doors*. But this subject I shall enlarge upon else where, * so that it is needless to say more upon it at present. Let me only just remind you, Christians, that now, *when*, as yourselves, if you are not resolved to shut your eyes, must see that *these things begin to come to pass*; it is high time for you to *look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand*: That is, provided you are happily pre-

pared for the critical summons. Otherwise your safety is no less precarious than the judgment it depends upon, and that is extremely so.

It is *precipitous* how soon or late it will be brought to pass; what state it will find you in, and in what state it will leave you.

How soon or how late the Son of Man will come is a secret to all, your Saviour tells you, even to the angels of heaven. For nigh at hand as it is, some of you may die before it; and possibly all of you may live to be the sad spectators of it, even in your mortal flesh. You can scarcely believe this? "All of us" you'll cry? "Why some of us are stricken in years, standing on the threshold of immortality." No matter for that. You are still in the flesh and the judgment of God is *nigh even at the doors*; and therefore may overtake you, before you take your first leap to eternity. "Surely 'tis impossible—" Why antichrist is not yet come!" Heaven forbid it. He is the immediate fore-runner of the wrath of God, and his reign is to last but three years and a half, at the end of which the dissolution of the world shall begin. What a piteous plight then would some of you be in, if after having lived twenty, forty, perhaps threescore years in spiritual sloth, perhaps in sin, you should have only three years and a half to mend that life in, to make reparation to God, to conquer your inveterate habits, and acquire a sufficient stock of grace and virtue to arm you against the wrath of your offended judge? And O my God, to what a fruitless purpose hast thou sent me into this sinful land, if, after a many years ministry without the having wrought perhaps the full conversion of one single soul, I should have scarce a four-years leisure left to make a fresh essay? Forbid it, gracious Lord, forbid it. Or give me first the sacred force to melt the hearts of every sinner I converse with, to such a true repentance, that, quite dissolved into compunction, the fervor of one minute's pure contrition may efface in them all the guilt of their preceding years, and quite confirm them in thy grace. Then let the beast appear and warn us of thy coming, when e'er thou pleasest.

Still, Christians, who can positively say, the monster shall not reign even now? The world is sufficiently prepared to receive him. But ah! are you as much prepared to resist this emissary of hell who shall try to seduce, if possible, even the elect? How ill-disposed then are not you for that dread judgment which must ensue? And which it is so precarious how soon or late shall come to pass? If you are not prepared for it at present; how will you promise yourselves that you shall be so when your dangers increase, and even the elect, with all their grace, shall find themselves not safe? Nay, if you are happily even in a state of grace, you have no

assurances

* In the sermon on the Last Sunday after Pentecost.

assurances of persevering to the end. 'Tis then precarious quite what state that judgment shall overtake you in; and consequently must be equally precarious, what condition, whether of happiness or misery eternal, it will leave you in; since your sentence to the one and the other will be wholly dependent on the good or bad state you will be in, when it overtakes you. You have nothing then to trust to for your future safety on that precarious occasion, but to your present fears and vigilance, *Watch then and pray that you enter not into temptation.* For it is dreadful to fall into the hands of the living God, because his judgment is terrible:

It is terrible in the apparatus preceding it; terrible in the majesty attending it; and terrible in the consequences which may succeed it.

What can be more repugnant to nature than the fear-inspiring presages of that wrathful period! The soul which is not entirely fear'd and harden'd into humanity, cannot bear the consideration of any of the cruel catastrophes which sensitive beings are subject to, without an inbred shock. How then could you be Christians, or men, or even a part of the creation; if you could eye the convulsions of nature, tho' but at a distance, without trembling with concern for it? No: To behold, tho' from far, the ruinous revolt of the air, the seas, the earth and the heavens, the desolation-breathing war of the elements, and the unparallel'd distress into which it will throw mankind, who will wither with very fear of what shall come upon the world; to behold all this, *I say*, tho' but in imagination, is sufficient to move your hearts, were they petrified with cruelty, to pity the unhappy mortals destin'd to encounter this unutterable woe: Especially as none of you can be certain, that, in pitying them you are not pitying yourselves. And what a piteous situation must be theirs who shall be witnesses to the dreadful prelude! Whither shall they fly from the many terrors surrounding them? You, Christians, who have acquired such a knack of dreaming when broad-awake; now for a minute consent to dream a little to the purpose. Fancy yourselves in the heart of a town taken by storm and put to pillage, sword and flame: The houses round you all on fire; beneath your feet a mine just ready to be sprung; over your heads the crackling beams, mixing with bombs, grenades and other heated mischiefs, fall thick about you, and excite a thousand terrors in you, all worse than the evils they can cause, or you can feel from them. And to augment your horror, what shrieks of widow'd wives assail your ears, with groans of parents robb'd of all their joy, and cries of orphans clinging to the mangled carcass of a dying mother; of brothers courting death to save a sister's honour; of daughters grasping a butcher in their arms to snatch a

father's life from the uplifted sword? Ah! whither is it safe to fly in such a rueful state? Turn to the right, a narrow lane of fire forbids you to advance. Betake you to the left, a sudden flood from various sluices intercepts the pass. Draw back you cannot; for death behind you breathes hot from every instrument of war. And if you look before you; an armed band of bloody foes expect you, ready to dispute your limbs between them. Ah what a wretched plight is this for poor unarm'd, defenceless mortals to be in; without a place of refuge; without the hopes of pity, of a friend to comfort, counsel or defend them! And yet all this itself is comfort, if compared with the less tolerable horrors of that day of storm, when God shall come to judge the world by fire. For then the very air will be in flames, and the earth will quake from it's very foundations; and leave it's miserable inhabitants no spot to stand upon in safety. And yet to flee from it will be equally unsafe: For the sea and waves will be agitated with tempests too dreadful to dare. And how will every mortal then be terrified each by the shrieks, and groans, and sighs, and lamentations of the rest, *all men withering for fear and expectation what shall come upon the world.* The aid, the comfort or advice of friends will then be useless, when all shall be in one sad comfortless condition. For then the only use which friends or companions will be of to each other shall be, to add the misery and consternation of others to their own. And what will finish their distress is, that their fears will be swell'd to the summit of anguish by the manifest impossibility of shunning the objects which provoke them. For in vain, says Christ, in vain, *shall they say to the mountains fall upon us, and to the hills cover us.* No: they shall not have the privilege of dying till they have wearied every horror with tormenting them. *In those days*, says he, *men shall seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die and death shall flee from them.*

Such, Christians, such will be the terrible apparatus to the general judgment. Judge you then, while you have power of reflection, what a strength of grace and fund of virtue must be requisite to enable you at that time to lift up your heads amidst the general consternation, to behold with joy the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty. And conclude from thence, how much it behoves you to arm yourselves with both, while you have time; that you may look up cheerfully in confidence that *your redemption is nigh.* But, alas, what are all the terrors I have mentioned to those which will attend the judgment itself, to which they are only a faint prologue. This I this shall make the very angels themselves tremble, and as your Saviour tells you even the powers of heaven

heaven shall be shaken. Place yourselves in spirit in the valley of *Jebosopbat*; and think you see the important assizes open'd. On right and left behold what innumerable multitudes of heavenly legions sit enthroned above, on radiant stars which they eclipse with their superior lustre. Nigh the imperial seat the Sacred Mother of the King of King's, *cloathed with the Sun and the Moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars*: And next to her, her blessed faithful Spouse and Guardian. Below the dread tribunal on the right, sitting on *twelve transparent seats*, the honourable jury of the twelve Apostles destin'd to judge the *twelve* unfaithful tribes of *Israel*: Lower on the left, in the mid-region of the air, the prince of darkness and the innumerable train of his infernal host stand ready to accuse mankind, and to involve the guilty in their own irrevocable misery: And lower still a multitude of people of every tribe and nation bespread the vale, gather'd from every part and corner of the world by sound of an angelic death-alarming trumpet, to receive the sentence they have earn'd of everlasting happiness or of unending woe. And now the court is ranged, the Book of Life is placed before the judgment seat, at the opening of which, all must divide to the right and left in separate parties never more to join; Some to be call'd to an eternal crown, others to be sunk into eternal fire. Ah christians! What a terrible situation is this? Uncertain on which side you shall be placed, how will you tremble then! But ah your terrors are not at an end! Behold the Almighty Judge, *the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty*, takes his seat. At his approach the earth trembles from its foundation, *all men withering with fear what shall come upon the world*. The devils shudder at their impending shame, the angels themselves are not unmoved with holy awe, and *all the powers of heaven are shaken*.

O what a terrible scene! For how terrible must it not be to see the justest of mankind, amidst their conscious innocence, trembling with holy dread of their all-weighting Judge. But *lift up your heads*, O happy souls! For you shall be parted to the right: *Look up*: For *your redemption is at hand*. Enough is it for you, O wretched sinners who have abused the mercies of your Saviour, to shrink with wild despair at the presence of your judge. Well may you wring your hands, and knock your knees, and gnash your teeth at the too horrible consequences you so justly foresee are to succeed this fatal terrible judgment; terrible indeed to you who shall be parted from the righteous, whom you have so long triumph'd over, to be placed on God's left hand; thence to be sunk for ever into the ruin you have purchased with so much idle industry. Call, call till you rend your throats, for refuge from your

terrors, you shall call in vain. In vain shall you *say to the mountains fall upon us and to the hills cover us*. For on that day, *You shall seek death and shall not find it; and shall desire to die and death shall flee from you*. For, one of the terrors attending this awful judgment, and that none of the least, is, that it is not to be shun'd.

II. It is even so, beloved fellow-christians: This judgment is inevitable, universal, and must be public.

It is *inevitable*, because the eternal truth who has foretold it, is the all-seeing judge who shall fulfil it; it is inevitable, because his infinite mercy requires it: and it is inevitable, because his justice must be manifested by it.

The Son of Man and God's eternal word and truth, have often told you of his second coming to judge the world. *Heaven and earth then shall pass but his word shall not pass*. It is not a bar of mortal judges, a judgment seat of temporal sovereigns, you are to be tried at. No: 'Tis the awful tribunal of the King of kings, where even monarchs will appear but criminals, and the world's proudest princes will have cause to shudder. There you must plead your cause before a judge whose knowledge is infinite, and whose wisdom unfolds the most hidden secrets: A judge who examines into all things with his own eyes, without the necessity of recurring to uncertain witnesses: And a judge of inflexible integrity, who pays no regard to persons. Before him, the prince and the peasant, the wit and the idiot, the learned and the illiterate will all be blended in one common undistinguish'd croud of criminals. No favour, no surprise, no corruption will screen them from the utmost severity of his justice; if their crimes exceed the number of their virtues, or their virtues are not season'd with perseverance. No: Nothing but the goodness of their cause can guard them from the terrors of that day. For then there shall be no bribing of witnesses to flatter, palliate, or puzzle truth; no corruption of council to support a bad plea: No moving spectacles or melting scenes of wives distressed, or weeping children, shall soften the severity of God's decree, or screen you from the rigour of his equity. It was in the ballance of this great equitable judge that *Balthasar* was weigh'd and found deficient; and in the same it is that many of those actions will be weigh'd, which you are apt to lay the greatest stress of your confidence upon. And ah, how many of those actions will be found, by your clear-sighted judge, extremely short in weight of that merit which you mistakenly rate them at! Happy, happy for you, with all your fancied goodness; if, on the whole, you are not found, like that unhappy prince, wanting in the necessary weight of grace and

and virtue at that important juncture. *Weep* then, says the prophet *Isaiab*, for the day of the Lord is near. Yet don't imagine that barren tears will be sufficient to obviate the terrors of it: No; Sigh and sob. That is not enough: Cry out mightily and waste your very lungs with crying out, Even that will not do. *Howl* then, says the prophet. Still all, *I say*, will not avail you; unless, while you have time, you join to your howlings and lamentations for your sins the amendment of your lives, the atonement for your offences, and the acquisition of that grace and virtue, which alone can secure you from despair on that dreadful inevitable day.

Inevitable, *I say*, not only because the eternal truth, who assures you of it, will fulfill it; but even because his infinite mercy and justice require it. Nothing will make this clearer to you, Christians, than the solving a fundamental objection against the very doctrine and faith of a general judgment. For, "what necessity can there be, *some miscreants may say*, for this last judgment; "Since every individual receives his eternal irrevocable sentence "of happiness or misery immediately after death?" Why, many reasons may be assign'd to prove it necessary. *First*, the body, it is plain, is not comprised in the immediate indictment after death. And yet that body has been an accomplice in evil with the soul which is condemn'd; or was a help-mate in the good of that which is glorified. It is highly consistent then with the infinite mercy and justice of God, that a second trial be appointed for punishment of the one and reward of the other. *Secondly*, It is highly requisite for the Glory of God and conviction of his creatures, that his impartial equity to all, whether good, or bad, should appear in the face of all: Which cannot be more effectually brought to pass, than by a general judgment. And this proves that judgment to be not only inevitable, but inevitably universal.

And so universal is it, that all creatures will be tried by it; all actions, words, and even thoughts will be examin'd into; and all accounts will be ballanced.

For *Thirdly*, tho' every man at his death will be tried for all the good or bad actions of his life; yet all the good or bad consequences which must and will necessarily flow from the virtuous example or scandal he has given, will daily multiply to the end of time. And therefore is it highly wise in God to appoint an universal judgment, to manifest his boundless mercy and justice in an equitable distribution of the rewards, or punishments, which shall appear to the whole world to be every man's due. All creatures then must be tried by it; all actions words and thoughts, good or evil, must be examin'd into. The prince, the statesman, the

divine, the lawyer, the physician, the soldier, the tradesman, and the mechanic: the man of luxury and the man of labour; the man of affluence and the man of want: All must account for their many talents or their single one with equal strictness. It is not barely for a little temporal substance, an estate, a province, or a government, they or you will be call'd to account: Not for the affairs of a day, of a month, or a year only; but for all your actions, words, and even inmost thoughts: Not only for the crimes you have committed; but even for the duties you have omitted: Not only for your own commissions of evil and omissions of good; but still more for the transgressions and neglects of your neighbours, which have any ways been occasion'd by your scandalous or indolent conduct: In a word, not only for the substance of your best as well as worst actions; but even for every minute circumstance of them. For as St. *Gregory* observes, circumstances will often throw a stain upon works the most laudable in themselves. And "many times "that appears sullied in the eyes of this all-seeing "judge, which self-esteem casts a false lustre "upon." Still this is not the sum total of your account. No: The natural gifts of body and mind, as health, strength, beauty, sense, memory and others: Those of fortune, as riches, power, dignity, birth and reputation: Those of grace as the holy sacraments, the frequent calls, inspirations and other means and opportunities now offer'd you of working your salvation. These, all and every one of these, will be put in the scale of justice with the use you have made of them. And woe to such of you as shall be found deficient in the weight of merit you may and ought to have! You then, O Catholics, will be examin'd, — not how strong, how rich, how fair, how witty, or how great you were; but how holily you lived? Not merely how well you knew the holy doctrines of Christ and his church; but how faithfully you practis'd what you knew? And you, O unbelievers, will not be ask'd, whether you lived as virtuous infidels; but why you were not catholics? Whether you ever heard of God's pure church; whether you ever went in search of truth or not; and whether you did not rather shut your eyes to it, for some mean temporal motive. Alas what a pitiful excuse will it not be to tell your God, that you shut your eyes from his all-saving obligatory truths, for fear of man's displeasure. But what have I said? I shall alarm you, Catholics, for your safety. What if some harden'd souls, exasperated with the truths they dare not stand, should wake old *Satan's* persecuting spirit. Suppose they should, beloved; alas what evils have you to fear, like the danger threatening your pastors. But ah my awful judge! What danger can we have to dread in this life, like that of meeting thy intolerable

tolerable frowns, when on the day of wrath thou shouldst reproach us with having suffer'd, through servile fear, one of thy dear-loved souls to be destroy'd. No: Rather let us perish in the pastoral office than one of them be lost through any indolence of ours. Raise us above all human frowns or favours. And since thou makest us answerable for the blood of all, give us, while uttering thy unerring truths, to fear the face of none; but rather make us, each, like thy prophet *Jeremy*, as a fenced city, an iron pillar and a brazen wall to the princes, priests and people of this land; that we may save our own souls, if we save not theirs; and may endure with comfortable hopes thy awful aspect on the day of thy inevitable; universal public scrutiny.

Yes, Christians: public it will be. For God and men and angels will be present at it; all crimes and virtues shall then and there be manifested; and all rewards and punishments be openly distributed.

Still keep in view, beloved, the awful court of judgment where all this important affair shall be transacted. Behold the Almighty in his judgment-seat of glory there presiding: Yourself and all mankind arraign'd at his tremendous bar. The angels now your guardians, then shall stand to accuse you of the ungrateful use you made of their protection, and the many times you slighted their assistance, calls and counsels to good-works. The devils then shall clear themselves of all the false aspersions you now cast upon them, and plainly prove that many crimes which you are pleas'd to charge them with, they had no hand in. Then shall they shew that, not content with following their suggestions to evil, You yourselves, your own worst devils, have studiously encounter'd the occasions of sinning, and tempted thus yourselves. But see the books of every conscience open'd: Ah now! Now indeed must all horrors be at their excess, when no one crime shall be screen'd from public infamy and punishment. Nothing shall be done in private, nothing in the dark: But all must appear in the broad face of day, to the eyes of the whole universe. The father's guilt must be publish'd to the world in the presence of his son; the husband's before his wife; the confessor's before his penitent; and the prevaricating penitent's before the confessor, he endeavour'd to impose upon. Ah! Christians! If you blush so much to unfold a hidden sin to your directors under the sacred tie of confession; guess, what must your confession be, when all your crimes and sacrileges shall be disclosed to the whole attentive world. O how many thousands then will wish, and wish, and wish in vain, to spare their public shame by private sacramental acknowledgment. How easy then would the ex-

change be thought which now we are so loth to reap the advantage of. For,---what a surprising scene will be open'd? How many will on that occasion be undeceived, when the wicked shall appear in all their deformity of soul, unmask'd and stript of the fair robe of sanctity which our mistaken Opinion cloathed them in; while on the contrary, the truly virtuous shall then throw off the rags of scandal they wore in this life, to put on the transparent mantle of glory. Then shall we find that many of those whom we thought saints were errant hypocrites; while others are glorified for those very actions we condemn'd them for.

But hold, the book of life unfolds. Time is it then, ye happy souls of God's elect, to range yourselves on God's right hand, forsake your fears, and leave the wretched multitude of reprobates to their despair. Look up and see: How in the twinkling of an eye all the accounts are ballanced. Lift up your heads then for your redemption is nigh, nigh to some purpose when your gracious judge, no more a God of terrors, but of love invites you to his glory. Come, come ye blessed of my Father possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. Happy, happy, happy ballance of public endless bliss and glory, for the little private labours and public shame of a few years. Ah wretched sinners! What must your rage be, to see yourselves excluded from this blessed number! Well may your bosoms throb; well may you burst with mad despair at the dread close of this tremendous scrutiny. Alas, your horrible accounts summ'd up, what is the sum total of your due? Tremble, ye hapless wretches, at the just but miserable ballance. Go, depart ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. O the hateful purchase of a few years fraud, oppression, luxury, and sloth! Thus, Christians, thus shall these last great assizes end: Such shall the issue of this judgment be: Unutterably happy to the good; and to the wicked beyond expression miserable. To both irrevocable; and That because,

III. It is final, it is decisive, and will admit of no appeal.

It must be final, because the seats of the fallen angels will then be fill'd; time will be no more; and fear and Hope will be lost in certainty. Mankind was created on purpose to fill the heavenly seats made vacant by the fall of Lucifer and his rebellious legions. Those then once fill'd, the world must be dissolved and time absorb'd in eternity. For the angel saith, says St. John, by him who liveth for ever, that time shall be no more. No! Then there will be no more time for fruitless repentance, no more time to atone for past neglects of time. Alas, Christians! How choice then

then ought you not to be of the little time you have in your Power, and know not how soon you may lose. O could the damn'd but snatch one minute of the many you so idly let slip, or so perversely misapply! What precious use would they not make of it, to repent, and save themselves from the misery their former neglect, perhaps no greater than yours, has irrevocably plunged them in? And should you go on to trifle time away; ah! How earnestly will not you yourselves wish, but wish in vain, to recall it, when too late. For then all fears and hopes shall be alike drown'd in the evidence of God's decisive judgment.

Decisive, because every cause will have been thoroughly examin'd; every plea will have been heard; and sentence will have been pronounc'd by a supreme and independent judge.

A mortal judge might be liable through malice or fatigue to overlook material circumstances in a trial of any length or intricacy. But God is incapable of malice, and his mercy and justice are alike indefatigable. He sees through all things and circumstances in an instant; and therefore nothing can escape his penetration. Nor is he capable of partiality; and therefore never bestows his glory or lays the effects of his resentment on any, till he has weigh'd their real merit, and clear'd up every plea which might obstruct the effects of justice or of mercy. He is supreme and independent judge of all his creatures; his power is not to be controul'd by any; and there is no being which can resist his will. Once then this Sovereign Judge pronounces his final decree, it is and must be decisive.

His dread sentence then, Beloved, admits of no appeal. No: For his sentence proceeds from his unquestionable equity; his equity is one with his wisdom and goodness, and both are unalterable.

There are few tribunals on earth but what have a sovereign to whom appeals may be made from their decrees. But here it is the Almighty Judge himself who decrees. Even sovereigns, on earth, may be and often are appeal'd to; from themselves misinform'd to themselves better inform'd. Why so? Because, however equitable their will may be, their judgment may be led, by misrepresentation or surprise, into injurious mistakes. But this cannot be the case with God, whose equity is infinite as his wisdom and goodness: That too penetrating to be deceived; and this too merciful to be the author of deception. And such God ever was, and is, and must be: Or he could not be the God he is.

You have seen, beloved Fellow-christians, the irrevocable judgment which attends you all: How terrible it must be to meet, whether the issue of it should prove miserable or prosperous. And near as it evidently is, it is so precarious when it will certainly come, that, unless you hoard up every re-

maining minute of your lives, it is very doubtful what state it will find you in. And surely I need say no more to convince you of what I first advanced, and have so long been labouring to prove, that your eternal salvation or perdition absolutely depends upon the good or bad state you will be found in, on that important day. Be prudent then and arm yourselves, while you have time, against the future terrors of it. For then as you see, *Time will be no more*. There will be no more time for conversion and satisfaction, no more time for grace and mercy, to step in between your crimes and the justice of your injured judge. In the particular judgment there may be a time accorded for atonement, a respite of payment, a purgatory for you to hope in. But in this there will be no respite allow'd, purgatory shall cease, and *where the tree falls, whether to heaven or to hell, there must it irrevocably lie*.

Begin then, dearest brethren, begin this new ecclesiastical year with the Church, by a devout preparation for the coming of your Divine Lord in the character of a loving, humble Saviour; that you may effectually find your redemption in him, when he shall come again in quality of your equitable Judge. *Prepare the way for him* to your hearts by a devout application to the holy sacraments, by frequent works of mercy, and by a holy, timely, filial awe, of his approach. But chiefly let your endeavours be to prevent the terrors of this last and dreadful scrutiny, by a daily faithful fruitful scrutiny of your own consciences. For, *if we did judge ourselves*, says St. Paul to the Corinthians, *we should not be judged*. Search your souls then to the bottom: Search there for all your wants of virtue to supply the defect: Search for your sins to destroy them by repentance; and search for the occasions of them to remove them effectually. Pass daily judgment on yourselves, for the sins or frailties, or neglects you discover in you; by imposing voluntary mortifications on yourselves; but more especially by a cheerful submission to the crosses, disappointments, involuntary temptations, and the trials which your gracious Lord sends you to purify and fit you for himself. Look upon them all as loving visits of your just Saviour, who is desirous to render you, by penance and patience, worthy to find him a merciful Judge. For, says our great apostle, *Whilst we are judged thus, by our Lord we are chasten'd, that with this world we may not be damn'd*. Do thus much then, beloved, and I will venture to risk my own salvation with yours, that, when you see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and majesty, you shall look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is at hand. Which, I beseech the Almighty to grant you: *In the name of the Father, &c.*

SERMON

[9]

S E R M O N

ON THE SECOND SUNDAY in A'DVENT.

St. MATH. xi. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6.

When John had heard in prison the works of Christ, sending two of his disciples, he say'd to him: Ar't thou he who art to come, or look we for another? And Jesus making answer, say'd to them: Go and report to John what you have heard and seen. The Blind see, the Lame walk, Lepers are made clean, to the Poor the Gospel is preach'd: And blessed is he who is not scandalized in me.

I DARE say, CHRISTIANS, your Preacher already seems too rough for Some of you and too tedious for Others. A heavy Charge, This, it must be own'd: And if it be well-grounded; you are in the right to find fault. For He tries in vain to profit you, who does not even study to please you. Say then, delicate disciples of Christ, in what sense is he too rough, that he may try to amend? "In what sense? Why,---he fills our minds with too many terrors." But how can that be? Has he made use of one fiction to terrify you, one terror to impose upon you? All the horrors described to you last Sunday, fall inexpressibly short of the Many which will attend you, if you don't resolve henceforth to arm yourselves better against them than perhaps you have hitherto done. The shot which is foreseen is the better evaded. What greater instance of tenderness can a Preacher shew you, than the attempt to snatch you from impending ruin by alarming you into safety? "True: But where is the necessity to dwell so much upon one topic? So many terrors at once, are enough to drive One into despair." You despair, Christians? No, no: There can be no danger of your running into that extreme till you part with the opposite vice. When I see you turn your backs on presumption, or even but begin to cling to it less; You shall see, how gently I'll talk to you, how tenderly I'll sooth your delicacy, how circumspcctly I'll manage to keep you wide of the very appearances of despair. But till then, what room have you to complain of any roughness in the saving Truths utter'd to you? What room is there to fear filling your minds with too many horrors; when all the horrors your Saviour has

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threaten'd vice with, and his Ministers remind you of, are not sufficient to make you less full of yourselves, less empty of that Christian wisdom which begins with the Fear of the Lord, or less slothfully averse to being rouzed out of the state of spiritual insensibility you are in? If we try to allure you to Virtue with the gracious Promises of God; don't we by repeated Experience find those Promises too weak to move Many of you? And if we attempt to deter you from sin by repeating the Divine menaces; those menaces indeed move you: But to what do they move you? Not to Repentance, but to peevishness; not to compunction, but to indolence. Tell me then, dear Lord, *To what shall I esteem this generation to be like? To what, says Christ? Why,---It is like to children sitting in the market-place, who, crying to their companions, say: We have piped to you, and you have not danced; We have lamented, and you have not mourn'd.*

"But why must preachers be so insufferably tedious! A sermon of a whole hour: Bless me! 'Tis enough to enervate devotion." Truly I fear as much with regard to some modern christians. A play, a ridotto, or a ball would suit them much better. A comedy they can sit at for hours, without tiring their patience; and at prophane amusements the weakest among you can shew yourselves indefatigable. Yet is there in this nothing to be much wonder'd at. In prophane assemblies your vanities are sooth'd: In church they are ruffled. There your minds and hearts give the reins to dissipation: Here they are call'd back to reflection. There, in a word, your passions are gratified; but mortified here. No wonder therefore that the most genteely tender of you all, even they who can scarcely without fainting vouchsafe God a bend of the knee, at the foot of the altar, tho' upon a chair, shall summon all their latent strength to foot away whole evenings at a ball. And what more common than that they, who would sicken at an hour's sermon heard at their ease once in seven days, shall find a superfluity of spirits to loiter away, without a sense of fatigue, every night of the week, at some fatiguing diversion or other. So very different are you at times from yourselves! Still is the cause of this difference very plain. Your fervor exists more

in
St. Math. xi.

in your heels than in your hearts, and your devotion is greater to the world than to the author of it. But whither am I running wide of the mark, or rather whither is your luke-warmness leading me? For shame, christians, be not so inconsistent. For self-pity be not such enemies to yourselves. Obstruct not the benefit your pastors intend you, by thus giving way to false delicacy, or misplaced oeconomy of time. If the dangers they point you out alarm your fears; listen to them with meekness, that you may learn to avoid those dangers. If you can spare so much longanimity to the fruitless impertinences of a prophane stage; afford a little patience to the soul-saving entertainments of the evangelic chair. Still add not to your condemnation (already perhaps too great) by hearing God's ministers with impatience and disregarding them thro' mistaken tenderness. But rather than do that, leave them to preach to bear walls. The walls, nay the stones in the streets shall sooner melt into devotion at the voice of God by their mouths, than you in such dispositions. Have a care then that walls, that stocks and stones, do not one day bear witness against your obduracy. Reflect, that if your teachers say too much, for your devotion; it is because you practice too little, for your own salvation. If they are too rigid, for your liking; it is because you are too relax'd, for them to connive at your conduct. Stop their mouths then at once. Grow better Christians, and they must have less to say; Be more circumspect, and they will in course have less room, less power to terrify you.

But last Sunday, beloved, I presented Jesus to your fears in the terrible guise of an equitable awful judge. Did I shock you in so doing? Behold then this day, to make you amends, I propose him to your love in the endearing character of a generous and affable advocate. THEN, to alarm your *Presumption*, by making you tremble at the fatal consequences of exasperating his justice with so much habitual freedom as you are in general but too guilty of, I shew'd him to your faith in his judgment-seat of equity, surrounded with the terrors of injured majesty. Now, to secure you from *Despair*, by directing you how to remove the evils I may have caus'd you to apprehend, I offer him to your affections in the throne of his mercy. If then the faint sketch I have already given you of the severity of Jesus your future rigorous judge, has disturb'd your mistaken tranquillity; let the imitation of Jesus your present merciful Saviour restore you to a tranquillity more lasting and solid.

Mercy is the darling attribute of God. It was chiefly to communicate this divine property to us, that he created us. And tho' to corroborate the efficacy of his merciful promises to such as love and serve him, he added the energy of terrifying mena-

ces to those who disobey him; yet he never intended to reduce those threats to practice but where human perversity should make it necessary. For great and dreadful as his justice is when exasperated; he graciously gave us the means to appease it in time. So true are the words of the inspired preacher * according to his greatness, so also his mercy is with him. It was principally to preach and practice this divine virtue to us that the Eternal Father sent down his only begotten Son into the world; that we might be enabled to escape the rigours of his justice by the imitation of his clemency. And therefore is it that our adorable Lord recommends it to us so strenuously: Therefore did he bid us emulate the perfection of God himself in the exercise of works of mercy: *Be merciful as also your heavenly Father is merciful.* † And therefore is it that he boasts of, and recommends to his disciples, this heaven-born quality more and more often than any of his other divine perfections. This, this is the very path which our Divine Lord points out to the ambassadors of John, in my text, preferably to all other paths, a path so direct (to use the words of *Isaiah* ‡) that fools cannot err by it. This the proof, which, with preference to all others, he refers the Baptist to, for the certainty of his being the true and only Messiah expected. Instead of referring the precursor to his incarnation, which *Isaiah* had plainly foretold, *Behold a virgin shall conceive and bring forth a son*; § he appeals to his works of beneficence which the messengers of John had been ocular witnesses to. In short, instead of recurring to the wondrous effects of his omnipotence, for a demonstration of his godhead, he draws the incontestable proofs of it from the ineffable influence of his mercy. Go and report to John, not the accomplishment of what you have read in the prophet, but what you have heard and seen. Tell him, *The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are made clean, to the poor the gospel is preach'd.* Thus does our Divine Lord insinuate to us, Christians, how much more he glories in being merciful than in being Almighty; and how much less he is pleased with our admiring and trembling at his power than with our imitating his mercy. O dearest condisciples of Christ! would you but catch the gracious hint which our heavenly master this day gives you, and improve it into practice; would you but, as he elsewhere directs, *be merciful as also your Father is merciful*; would you, in a word, but imitate your Saviour in the noble exercise of works of mercy to your brethren in this life; how little cause would you have to fear his approaches, in the next, in quality

* Ecclesiasticus ii. 23.

† St. Luke vi. 36.

‡ Chapt. xxxv.

§ *Isaiah* vii. 14.

quality of judge? This is what I purpose to shew you in my present discourse: To do which I shall now lay before you,

I. In theory, the sovereign importance and fruitful necessity of works of mercy, to attain to salvation; and

II. The universal facility and indispensable duty of reducing them to practice, with regard to persons of all stations.

“O sovereign Lord God, merciful and clement, compassionate and generous, who shewest mercy to thousands, who dealest liberally by all! Be not implacably offended at us for our past obduracy and unrelenting rigour towards our neighbours in their several wants. But since thou hast done so much to teach us to commiserate and succour, one-another in our mutual indigencies, O add the farther gracious bounty of giving us the practice: That, merciful to others, we may ourselves find mercy at thy throne of justice and be secure from that tremendous judgment which shall attend the merciless.”

I. The works of mercy, beloved auditors, which we may and must practice towards our neighbours in order to be saved, are of two sorts, *spiritual* and *corporal*; Those which tend to the removal of their indigencies in the soul, and those which regard the relief of their bodily wants. Now if we do but reflect for a minute on the nobility and excellence of the soul above the body, and how much the former transcends the latter in it's dignity of nature and operations, we cannot help seeing that the two kinds of works of mercy above mentioned are not only of a very different nature, but even that the *spiritual* are beyond comparison of superior importance and necessity to the *corporal*. For this reason I shall give them the preference in this discourse: And, as I design elsewhere to treat upon the *second* sort, I shall at present wholly confine myself to the consideration of the *first* sort, namely, the *spiritual* works of mercy; that my launching into too wide a field of matter may not render this sermon fruitless by making it too obscure or too prolix.

Every christian in possession of reason, if he will make use of his reason, must evidently see the sovereign importance of his practicing the *spiritual* works of mercy towards his neighbours in necessity of them, whether these works be consider'd with regard to God or to man.

With regard to God, sure we are that our whole conduct to our neighbours will be rewarded or punished by the rule of strict retaliation. With the

difference however of time and eternity: That being the measure of our actions in this life, and this the measure of his justice and mercy in the next. For the certainty of this we have his own divine word. *With the same measure that you do mete, it shall be measured to you again*, says our blessed Redeemer. * Of all the virtues recommended to us to practice towards one-another there is no one so frequently or so warmly inculcated to us by him as mercy: And no vice so degraded and loaded with threats as the want of mercy. Whenever the Almighty either by himself or his sacred writers speaks of this heavenly virtue he never fails to express the praises of such as practice it, or to encourage them in it by ineffable promises. In the *Psalter* † he declares the man blessed who has consideration on the poor and indigent. In the *Proverbs* ‡ he styles him the benefactor of his own soul. In one place he exhorts us to do mercy as the most solid foundation we can build our hopes of salvation upon: § *Keep mercy and judgment*, says the Lord, *and hope in thy God always*. In another he declares the love of mercy to be a necessary proof of our love of God: || *He who honoureth the Lord bath mercy*. In the *Proverbs* again ** He calls it the safeguard of princes and the support of their throne. And in *Ecclesiasticus* †† compares it to the delights and securities of paradise. In short, mercy, as *St. Paul* says to *Timothy* ‡‡ is useful to all that is good, and full of promises and assurances of a blissful futurity. I should never have done, was I to quote to you all the encomiums and promises made to the practitioners of the works of mercy. But all are needless, after the express assurance of bliss, which the fountain of all mercy has given them in those ineffable words, *Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy*. And if the praises and promises of the merciful are great and desirable; the curses attending the unmerciful are no less horrible. The royal *Psalmist* §§ speaking of the unmerciful says, *For that he remember'd not to do mercy... he put on malediction as a garment, and it enter'd as water into his bowels, and as oil into his bones*. Whence the inspired monarch gives us to understand how inevitable is the eternal damnation of such as neglect to practice works of mercy towards their indigent brethren. For as nothing sticks closer to the body than the garment it is cloath'd with, so nothing clings more closely to the soul of the unmerciful than the malediction due to his obduracy of heart. It surrounds him on every part, it blocks up every avenue thro' which the divine lights and graces

* *St. Luke* vi. 37. † *Psalm* xli. 1. ‡ *Prov.* xii. 10. § *Isa.* lvi. 1. || *1 John* iv. 19. ** *Prov.* xx. 17. †† *Eccles.* x. 12. ‡‡ *1 Tim.* v. 10. §§ *Psal.* cxxxv. 17.

* In the sermon on the first Sunday after Pentecost.

graces might enter into his mind and heart: Nay, as the liquids he imbibes are wont to incorporate themselves with the juices of his body, so the curses entail'd on the pitiless penetrate, blend and become one with all the faculties of his soul, so as to be inseparable from them. O the dreadful situation to be in! What reasonable hopes can a man in such a deplorable circumstance form to himself of receiving any blessing, any grace, any mercy from GOD? No, no, *Judgment without mercy*, says St. JAMES, * *to him who hath not done mercy*.

Reason good then had the venerable father St. Leo for what he advanced on this subject: "Such and so great, *says he*, will be the value set on the *works of mercy*, at the last great judgment; and such the penalty adjudged to the *want* of them; that the *latter*, as the consummation of iniquity, will alone be sufficient to precipitate the merciless into never-ending flames, notwithstanding any other virtues they may have practiced: Whereas the *former* will be accepted for the fullness of all virtues and introduce their practicers into the kingdom of God. For,—so important is the virtue of mercy, *continues the saint*, that all the other virtues without it cannot avail: Let a man have a lively faith, let him be ever so chaste, ever so temperate, in short, let him be adorn'd with many and excellent virtues of other kinds, still, if he is not merciful, he deserves no *mercy*." Thus you see, christians, from the fix'd sentiment of GOD and his church, that there is no mercy, no grace, no blessing can attend those who neglect the works of mercy, tho' they should abound with every other excellence. Whereas on the contrary the man who pursues these noble works has every blessing to hope for, tho' he should have been deficient in every other duty. Let his life have been ever so abandon'd, let his sins have been ever so multiplied, let his iniquities be ever so black, ever so heinous: This one divine virtue alone is able to call him back to repentance, to plead his forgiveness, to throw a veil over his sins, and to render his repentance grateful to GOD and fruitful to himself. Thus much the Almighty assures us of, by the mouth of his Solomon, in these words, † *Let not mercy desert thee, put it about thy throat, write it in the tables of thy heart and thou shalt find grace and good discipline before God and man*. So efficacious then in the sight of GOD are *works of mercy* in the behalf of a sinner, who faithfully practices them, that he cannot well be damn'd if he persist in the practice of them, and does not practice them from a motive of presumption, but from the desire of pleasing GOD, in the relief of his image.

In what other sense can we take the words of St. Peter, † *charity covereth a multitude of sins*, than

that the charity which is practiced in *works of mercy* done to a neighbour for GOD's sake, are capable of converting to repentance the most abandon'd sinner, of pleading pardon for his sins and throwing a cover over the multitude of his offences? Certain it is on one hand that charity, or christian mercy, cannot subsist without a state of grace, and on the other hand repentance or a conversion to grace is not possible while the heart is void of natural mercy. But such is the nature of a merciful disposition of heart, that it disposes the soul for the reception of graces, and attracts the preventing grace of GOD into the soul. So that tho' it be true that his repentance be the immediate cause of a sinner's reconciliation with GOD, his mercy, next to the Divine Grace, is a remote cause of his repentance; and, after his repentance, pleads strongly before the throne of GOD, for the remission of those punishments which remain due to his guilt. Hence might the apostle well say, that *charity covereth a multitude of sins*. Nay, had he said, that it covereth every sin, he had not exceeded: For it is probably very rare, if ever, that GOD suffers a charitable man who practices works of mercy with an upright intention, to depart out of this life in a state of mortal sin. For the man who does good to many has the good wishes of many; and where many join in just prayer to GOD, he will not be inexorable. I say not this without a venerable sanction. "I do not remember, *says St. Jerome*, ever to have read of any one dying a bad death, who studiously practiced *works of charity*. For such a one has many intercessors; and it is *morally* impossible that the prayers of many should be rejected."

Now if we compare this merciful conduct of the Divine Majesty towards the merciful, with his rigorous treatment of the unrelenting, a conduct which his eternal word and truth are at stake to maintain; we cannot help seeing the sovereign importance and fruitful necessity of practicing works of mercy.

But what will set the whole in an irresistible light, is the viewing with an eye of reason the infinit wisdom and equity of GOD in his conduct to both. GOD could not be infinitely wise if he did not see into the *reins and hearts* of all, which in fact he does, as he warns us by the mouth of his Psalmist. * Nor could he be infinitely just if he did not reward every man according to his works. But in fact he does; and in so doing his mercy as well as his justice appears: † *Unto thee, O Lord*, says the inspired DAVID, *belongeth mercy: For thou renderest to every man according to his work*. It concerns then not only the justice but even the mercy of GOD, to grant to every man the wages which he has not only merited and earn'd in virtue of the covenant between him and GOD, but even in some sense

* Ch. ii. † Prov. iii. † Chap. iv.

* Ps. vii. † Ps. lxi.

sense solicits and demands: Now it is not barely true that the merciful are intitled to mercy, and the unmerciful to rigour in virtue of God's eternal promises to those and menaces to these; but it is even true that the works of the *former* and the severities and relentless neglects of the *latter*, are in one sense so many solicitations to God for their stipulated wages. It evidently then concerns the divine mercy as well as justice to grant eternal blessings to the merciful, and to load with eternal rigour the unmerciful. What does the merciful man do in every benefaction he bestows, but enter into party with the mercy of God, declare his approbation of it in practice, and express his desire of profiting by it? So on the reverse, what less does the unrelenting man do, in rejecting mercy from his own breast than condemn the author, existence and use of it? What less than disclaim the virtue he wrings from his heart? And what more effectual can he do to express his preference of rigour to mercy? Words are nothing near so expressive of the sentiments of the heart as facts; and therefore however fervently a man may pray to God for mercy with his tongue, if his actions implore for rigour; it is an undeniable proof that his words are but dissimulation, and the rigour he pursues must be the object of his wishes. And therefore God who sees and searches the reins and the heart will regard, not his prayer of words but the petition of his deeds. And that this will be the divine rule of judging, the reproof which he gives the *Jews* in *Isaiah** is a manifest argument. *For that this people honour-eth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; therefore, says the Lord, behold wisdom shall perish from their wise men, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be bidden.* It is not then by an abundance of speeches; but by the energy of their actions that God judges the hearts of men: And according to their activeness in works of mercy or their neglect of them, will he exert his mercies or his rigours towards all. It is plain therefore from these considerations alone, how important, useful and necessary it is for us to practice *works of mercy*, if we consider them only with regard to God.

And even if we consider them with regard to man, we shall find it to be highly our interest, beloved auditors, to be merciful to our neighbours. There is something inexpressibly endearing to others in every fellow-feeling we express for their wants; and tho' it may be possible, and even probable for us to practice many acts of mercy towards our neighbours without receiving any return, or perhaps but an ungrateful one; yet if we persevere we cannot in the end but find our account in it. It is not the force of one, two, three, nor three thousand drops

* Chap. xxix.

of water, but the incessant dripping of it, that perforates the marble which receives it. So thousands of works of mercy may be thrown away on our neighbours without bringing in either pleasure or fruit: but the continuation of them seldom fails of working upon the most obdurate ungrateful heart, and of being amply rewarded with both pleasure and profit in the long run. At least this we are sure of, that if our works of mercy are not retaliated in this world, our wants of mercy will be so. For frugal as the generality of mankind may be in returning good for good; to do them justice, they are seldom sparing in the retaliations due to ill-nature. The man who has no bowels for the indigences of another, of whatever kind they be, is never loved and seldom respected by any, but where interest compels; and that only in outward show. Even those of his own stamp look down on him with aversion. And it is the general maxim of all, as well the mercilefs as the merciful, that the man who is void of pity for others, disclaims all pity for himself and courts the severity he deserves. Whence it comes that the most unrelenting think it necessary to dissemble the fellow-feeling they are void of in fact. But dissimulation will not do to secure pity from mankind in our indigencies. For, besides that God will shut up their bowels to the dissembler, their own reason will not suffer them to be the dupes of a flimsy affectation which his actions give the lie to. A man then may talk compassionately and look with eyes of pity till he can talk and look no longer; yet if he is rigorous to his neighbour or slothful in works of mercy; he will find few, if any, inclined to credit his words or his looks. They will rather consider his mercilefs conduct as a formal renunciation of humanity, and an open courtship of rigour. And he may be very sure, that the world will be complaisant enough to pay him the severity he publicly deserves and practically desires. For tho' a man cannot always secure to himself as much respect and good usage from other men as he really deserves; yet I believe it is pretty generally true, and allow'd to be so, that he may always command from the ill-natured world all the rigour, hatred, disrespect and ill-treatment his heart can wish for. And consequently as none of you are disposed, I presume, to covet ill-usage for the sake of being ill-used and deserving to be so; it cannot but be highly important for you to deserve otherwise, by being merciful to your fellow-creatures. I say not this to suggest to you any mean selfish motives in the works of mercy you ought to practice towards your neighbours. I only mean to convince you that God in this requires nothing of you but what your temporal as well as eternal interest is immediately concern'd in your practice of: Inasmuch that, tho' you should stake some little temporal advantages and conveniencies

veniences for the sake of being merciful to a brother in need of your assistance, you hazard nothing in reality by so doing, if the great advantages temporal as well as eternal which you are sure of reaping by it, be consider'd and compared with the horrid evils you avoid. Of such high importance it is and so necessary as well as beneficial to be assiduous in the works of Mercy. Still to render them truly beneficial, care must be taken to do these works purely, or principally, for the Love of God, and out of a Christian commiseration for his indigent little Ones. Otherwise if we do them out of mere human respect or other temporal motives, we lose all the merit of them in the sight of God, and render them of no benefit to Life Everlasting.

What I have hitherto said, Beloved Christians, may seem perhaps, too general to be particularly applicable to the Spiritual Works of Mercy. But in reality it is not: For surely if thus much be true, as it undeniably is, even with regard to the bodily distress of our neighbours; it will not be question'd that it is much more so with regard to the indigences of their souls. And tho', as I hinted above, these Works are in their nature very different, yet is there a strong analogy between them. The soul which is void of the knowledge of Christ's holy Faith or a stranger to his heavenly precepts may, without straining a metaphor, be look'd upon as unclothed: He therefore who labours to instruct Such a one in either or Both, as his exigence requires, may with a great deal of Propriety be said in a spiritual sense to cloath the naked. What is the laprosy of sin but the worst of diseases the soul can be afflicted with? To reform sinners then by wholesome reproof and discreet correction is one way, and that the most eminent way, of visiting and nursing the sick. The impotence of soul which doubt and uncertainty creates is of a far more destructive kind than the languor of body which hunger produces. A state of suspense is a more wasting evil than the keenest famine; and the body will subsist longer under a want of food and be less sensibly impair'd by it, than the spirit of man under the grinding circumstance of wanting advice. Who then will deny that assisting and buoying up the Doubtful with salutary counsel is the most excellent kind of feeding the Hungry? Why does the inspired *Son of Sirach* * compare afflictions to the potter's furnace, and to the dryness of the earth which is parch'd for want of rain? Why, but because affliction scorches and withers the soul of man more intensely than the severest thirst can do the body? What then is the comfort which a merciful man administers to the afflicted but a spiritually healing draught

* *Eccles. xxvii, xxxv.*

given to the thirsty? The man who does injuries to another and is an enemy whether public or private to him, is not only a slave to Satan and his own passions, but is generally an exile from the heart of the man he has injured, and a captive to the effects of his resentment, till the latter by a Christian reconciliation restore him to his affection and forgiveness, and thereby rescues him from every rancour he had conceived against him. By forgiving injuries then and renewing friendship with our real or fancied enemies we really and truly, in the most noble sense, visit and ransom captives, as far as relates to us; and may chance to ransom them even from Satan's power, by the good effect our mercy and example may work upon them. Of two evils it is far more eligible to be, without cover, exposed to the inclemency of the season, than, shut out of the hearts of mankind, to be exposed to the inclemency of an incensed multitude, with a palace over one's head. And 'tis the general case of the Troublesome, the Faulty and those who are prone to mischief, to be excluded not only the houses but the hearts of all who know them. To bear patiently then with the faults and wrongful practices of such, to cherish them still in our hearts, and return to them good for evil is surely a noble, divinely noble, way of harbouring the harbourless. The last tribute of corporal mercy we can pay to a deceased neighbour is to give his bones a decent interment, to screen them from insults and irreverences. Surely then the rest we labour to procure for their souls must be a more eminent obsequy, and a more lively proof of our mercy towards them: And if we are unmerciful whenever we omit praying for them dead; our cruelty must be double in neglecting to solicit for those who survive them. For however great may be the necessity the deceased may have for our suffrages; their very state of suffering, if they are in reach of our assistance, is a state of safety: Whereas the surviving part of mankind are from their birth to their decease in perpetual danger of damnation, through their own perversity or inconstancy. And therefore the very duty which obliges us to bury the dead, calls loudly upon us much more to pray for the living and dead. So close an analogy is there between the *spiritual* works of mercy and the *corporal*, and between our obligations to practice both as far as our power extends. From all which will naturally result, *First*, — that the *works of mercy spiritual* are to us of infinitely greater importance and necessity to salvation than the *corporal*: as the eternal happiness of our neighbour is infinitely preferable to his temporal felicity; and consequently that the *former*, as being of prior obligation, must have the preference, in our practice of the *latter*, whenever we cannot practice both at once. *Secondly*,

ly, it follows—that all which can be said in favour of mercy in general or particularly of the *corporal* works, must be eminently true of the *spiritual*: And what ever has been advanced to the terror of such as are unrelenting to the bodily distresses of their neighbours, is big with double matter of dread to those who neglect to remove their *spiritual* indigences. Upon the whole then, since the merciful are sure to find that mercy which the purest of mortals stand in need of from God, and the unmerciful are out of the reach of that Divine Clemency, without which none can be saved: Since, I say, eternal truth expressly assures us, on one hand, that *Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy*; and, on the other hand, tells us by the mouth of his apostle, that *judgment without mercy shall be to him who does not shew mercy*: Since, in a word, God could not be God, without fulfilling these divine promises and threats which his mercy and justice require him to maintain; and which our temporal as well as eternal interest requires us to regard, and that more especially with respect to the spiritual good of our neighbours; we must be void of all reason as well as grace and shamefully absent to the use of both, if we do not see how sovereignly important and fruitfully necessary it is for us to be assiduous in the practice of spiritual works of mercy to our indigent neighbours, if we mean to escape the terrors of that universal judgment which we must all be present at, and tried by.

But what will corroborate this beyond the power of your doubting, beloved christians, is this beautiful reflection of a venerable father of the church * “In the kingdom of heaven before all the angels at the general congress of human nature resuscitated, the sufferings of *Abel*, the preservation of the species by *Noah*, the fidelity of *Abraham*, the legislative labours of *Moses*, the crucifixion of *Peter* in imitation of his Lord, will pass unmentioned. All the cry we find, in our Saviour’s description of it, is the *poor are fed*, &c.” Yes, christians, it is even so: Read but the twenty fifth chapter of St. *Matthew* and yourselves will see what are the points you will be tried on: Not upon your power, learning or other excellencies, or the want of them: Not upon your knowledge of mysteries or power of miracles, or the want of them. No: But *I was hungry and you gave me to eat*, with your counsel or your table: *I was thirsty and you gave me to drink*, by administering comfort to my soul, or drink to my body, &c. Come therefore, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. O blessed, thrice blessed! merciful, for whom such a flood of mercy and bliss is reserv’d! And oh wretched, on the contrary! unutterably

wretched merciless! Hear and tremble at the judgment and sentence reserved for you. *I was hungry*, languishing for want of advice, wasting for want of food, and you gave me not to eat. *I was thirsty*, withering in my soul for want of comfort, parch’d up in my body for want of a refreshing draught, and you gave me not to drink, &c. Go then, go into everlasting fire, ye cursed. But, Lord, the humble just shall say, when did we see these hungry and fed thee; thirsty and gave thee to drink? So too the confident merciless, When Lord did we see thee hungry or thirsty... and did not minister to thee. Ah! replies the equitable judge, turning to the merciful, As long as you did it to one of these my least brethren you did it to me. And as long as you (turning to the merciless) did it not to one of these lesser, neither did you do it to me. Blessed then are you, O merciful, for you shall now obtain the mercy I promised you. And you, O merciless, as my Psalmist * told you, loved cursing and it shall come to you; you would not blessing and it shall be far from you. Wherefore depart ye cursed, as you are, into everlasting fire. For judgment without mercy to you who have not done mercy.

Such and so great, dear fellow christians, is the value Christ, your future judge but present Saviour, will set upon works of mercy, especially of the spiritual order, preferably to all other excellences. And where is the wonder, when, as you see in the very words of my text, he lays more stress on the works of his own mercy than on those of his omnipotence? When the precursor starts that bold question to him: “Ar’t thou the Messiah, or not? He sends him not for answer, “a virgin has brought forth a son: One who can turn water to wine; one who can command the winds and the seas, and convert the waters to a solid path.” No: These works of his omnipotence he buries in silence; and only mentions those of his mercy: *The blind* to the knowledge of God, as well as to the light of day, see: *The lame* in virtue, as well as limbs, walk: *The Lepers*, and unclean of heart are made clean, by the purifying lotion of grace: The poor are no longer despised, but to them the gospel is preach’d. And why, think you, does our divine Lord chuse these works for the special proofs of his divine mission, preferably to any of the more striking effects of his omnipotence; but to insinuate how much more he delights in his mercy than in his other attributes, and how much more he is delighted with mercy in us, than with any other excellencies.

But no more of this: Enough, I presume, christians, has been said to shew you, in THEORY, the sovereign importance and fruitful necessity of works of mercy, in order to salvation. And very little more

* *Peter of Ravenna.*

* *Pf. cviii.*

more need be said to convince you of the universal facility of reducing them, especially the spiritual ones, to practice, with regard to persons of all conditions.

II. There are three lights in which you may be consider'd with regard to your neighbours: As superiors, as equals, as inferiors. If superiority gives you a power over others, it cannot be doubted but that you have the facility, as well as authority, of correcting and labouring for the reformation of the sinners under your charge; and where you neglect to do it, besides the becoming accessory to their guilt by connivance, you are cruel to excess in overlooking the irregularities you may and do not oppose. Who shall curb the licentiousness of the wicked, if they who hold the reins of power for that purpose do not do it? Who shall bring the fault to a sense of their failings, if superiors overlook them? Nay tho' you should be but equals or even inferiors to those who want reproof; what do you risk by a seasonable hint, what by a sin-confounding gravity of visage? You, O equals, instead of chiming-in with your company, in detracting, lewd, or other vicious discourse; how easily might you not stem the sinful torrent, by publicly opposing it, or changing the discourse, or quitting the company, or at least expressing your disapprobation with the energy of a composed and awful silence? You, O servants and inferiors, instead of being criminally instrumental to the vicious pleasures or interests of your superiors; how easily might you by a steady forbidding sanctity of deportment oftentimes deter them from or shame them out of their vices, or at least discourage them from ever attempting to make you infamous accessory tools in them. If you have not the power to correct the sinner; you can never be in so low a state as not to have it in your power to check him with your disapproving countenance, or discountenancing conduct. How glorious the instance we have of this in that *French* soldier, who, hearing some persons superior to him in condition, making use of unnecessary oaths, the fashionable expletives of conversation, went up to them, and, with a modest firmness becoming the noble character he asserted, reprimanded them for it, adding this graceful apology: "Pardon, sirs, the freedom I take: It would ill become one, who is a soldier of Christ much more than of *Lewis*, to be witness to such open prostitutions of his sovereign's honour and not defend it." O the heroic grandeur of soul, which shines in this short but excellent oration! O christians! that I could but make you sensible of the pathetic force which such a conduct must have on the hearts of most men! Not that I will gainsay it's being possible, that it may sometimes lose it's just weight with the prophane.

But for one libertine who scoffs at it: O how many must benefit by it! O equals and inferiors! What have you not to answer for, in your neglect of the like noble conduct? While you have the power to think, to speak, to act like christians, you cannot want power to correct, reprove, or check the sinner, above you in temporal condition, by the sanctity of your words or the awfulness of your deportment. And therefore as often as you fail in so doing, you are unmerciful, and your obduracy is without excuse. And much more are you excusless, O magistrates, parents, and heads of families! Ah! What have not you to answer for, who hold in your hands the rod of correction in vain, while you render it useless, if not through your sin-nurting example, at least through your shameful supineness or false and ill-judged tendernefs. But *tendernefs*, did I say? Alas it is barbarity, downright barbarity. Hear a heathen and blush. "He *says Seneca*, who has it in his power to preserve a man from death and does not do it, may be said to murder him." And he, *say I*, who, by prudent reproof, discountenancing looks or awful example, has it in his power to save a soul from sin, and either thro' dastardly fear, indolence, or false tendernefs neglects to do it, may be said to damn him, if he be damn'd. And in no sense more truly than in this, we may say with *Solomon*, that *the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel*.

The very same may be said with regard to the instruction of the ignorant: A duty which is incumbent on all persons, but more especially on superiors of all stations; parents, heads of families, and patrons: Who having the immediate charge of the uninstructed, are under an indispensable obligation to guard them, as much as possible, from every danger which may hazard their eternal salvation. And how shall they do this but by instructing them in the holy mysteries of faith, and enriching their minds with heavenly knowledges, and the grand important science of working their salvation in fear and trembling? What should hinder you, O rich, from providing for the necessary instruction of the poor and their children under vassalage to you; and of the orphan or forsaken infant recommended to your mercy? A very trifle out of the exorbitant superfluities you inconsiderably lavish without profit, without praise, and often without pleasure, would more than suffice to satisfy all the demands of this kind which God has upon you, as stewards and treasurers of his poor. What should hinder you, O heads of families, from summoning your domestics, at a certain hour in the day, to devout lectures and spiritual instructions? One half of the time you lavish in indolence (to say no worse) one half the leisure you allow them to waste, perhaps to your own disadvantage, would employ you and them

them to the eternal advantage of both. And you, who allow your servants no respite from labour! you, who look upon your servants as slaves, and consider your imaginary slaves as creatures of an inferior species; and therefore, as if they had no souls to save, will afford them no leisure to pray, to read, and scarcely to think, much less to hear a sermon, and too often not even to hear mass on a holiday of obligation! You, *I say*, did you but know the fruits of working upon good principles; you would find your account (even temporally speaking) more in teaching them to work well, than in forcing them to work hard. Teaching them to be good christians, you would in course make them good and faithful servants; and the time you might consume in forwarding them in the service of God would be made up to you with interest, by the industry with which they would learn to labour for your service. But you, O parents, above all! What can obstruct your filling the minds and hearts of your children with early notions of faith and piety? You have time enough to play with and fondle them, time enough to fill their little heads with insolent repartees, and senseless stories, capable only of prepossessing them with absurdities; and full time to initiate them in all the mysteries of foppery, coquettishness, and buffoonery. If then you have not time to instruct them in the mysteries of christian faith and morality; what must be the fault? Ah christians! give me leave to pass it over in silence: It is something too shameful to reproach christians with in plain terms, without giving infidelity matter of triumph. That little master may be taught to dance, to fence, to ride, besides the accomplishments of a moderate classic student, time must be found; and very fit it should be found where his station requires it. But for his catechism, why must it generally be a matter of very little concern, not barely to him, but even to his parents, whether he gives up any time to it or not? To teach little miss to dance gracefully, to walk genteelly, to move with an air, to turn out her feet, to hold up her head, to sing, to play, to look sprightly (and what not?) O how many hours are consumed! What a waste of breath is thought necessary! Whereas how frugal are the minutes allow'd her, for imbibing such sentiments of piety and christian prudence, as are indispensably requisite to guard her against letting those worldly accomplishments become a snare to her, and an instrument of her eternal as well as temporal ruin? O shameful, crying, unnatural neglect! O indolent parents! What have you to expect but heart-breaking treatment from children thus educated? What wonder will it be, that, when grown up, they should fly in the face of heaven and you, and give a loose to every riotous irregularity; if you, in their child-

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hood, neglect to strengthen them in those religious sentiments, which alone can teach them to act rightly in every character by acting upon right principles? If you are not capable of giving instructions yourselves; you are none of you incapable of applying to the priest's of God's Church, to obtain instruction for the ignorant who are in any sense under your care: And such are all those whom you know to be ignorant and whom you can prevail upon to be instructed, of whatever condition they or you may be. You are all of you capable then with ease of instructing the ignorant or getting them instructed: And if you do not do either, when the occasion offers; christians as you may be, you are the reproach of christianity and *Jews and Heathens* have a better chance for salvation. For as *St. Paul* bears witness, * *if any man hath not care of his own, and especially of his domestics, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel.*

I will allow that every-one is not a *Solomon*, nor capable of clearing up the clouds of doubt which hover over the mind of a neighbour. But every-one is capable of exhorting a person under such clouds, to recur to God in prayer for the heavenly light necessary to dissipate the gloom of suspense; and if we cannot ourselves afford him the advice he wants, we may prevail upon him by tender remonstrances, to unbosom himself to some minister of God who shall be able to counsel him. Without being orators, we may afford comfort to the afflicted, by externally expressing a concern for their misfortunes; by sharing in their griefs; by entering into their little resentments along with them, in order to steal them insensibly out of them; by comparing the evils they suffer, with some greater evils which they might have suffer'd, as others do and have done; by suggesting to them patience, resignation, and the example of Christ; and by many other endearing means which a merciful disposition will suggest: All which requires less art than good-will, and is attended with much more merit than labour. These then, christians, are easy duties; and you all covet to have these duties practiced for your relief in time of need. Consequently it is an indispensable tie upon yourselves to practice them to the utmost of your abilities, whenever the necessities of your neighbours call upon you for advice or consolation. *All things therefore whatsoever you will that men do to you, says Christ, do you also to them. For this is the law and the prophets.* † Yes, Christians, the perfection of the law of God and Christ is that you practice to your neighbours in their necessities, those acts of mercy, which yourselves must wish for in time of need: "And he, *says St. Gregory*, approaches nearest to

* 1 Tim. v.

† St. Mat. vii.

perfection

"perfection who sympathizes most in the anguish of others his fellow-creatures."

The man who is troublesome or faulty, and the enemy who does us an injury, however they be chief agents in the moral evil of their actions, are still but under-instruments of God in the physical evil we suffer by them. And many times perhaps does it happen that the Almighty permits even his favourites, through some unwillful mistake of their judgment, to persecute or be troublesome to us without design; nay to do us very grievous injustices without a sin on their parts? It being his gracious will, not that they should sin, but that we should suffer, for a trial of our virtues or the punishment of some vices. But granting them to be ever so criminal in the trouble they give, the faults they are guilty of, or the enmity they practice towards us; they may in time repent, they may hereafter be reconciled to God and enter into his glory before us. So that in hating them, we may run the risk of hating our brethren and not know it, as *St. Augustin* observes: In returning evil for the present evil, we may be persecuting God's elect, and not know it: In refusing them a place in our hearts, we may be renouncing fellowship and communion with his saints, and not know it: Still will our ignorance be no excuse for us; because we ought to know better than to run the risk of so doing.

These considerations duly weigh'd cannot but make it a much easier matter than we are apt to conceive it, to bear with the troublesome and to forgive our enemies. And much more easy must these great duties be to us; if we keep in view the patience and forgiveness practiced by that Divine Lord whose disciples we are, who not only mercifully bore with the troublesome and faulty; but chose to converse with them, for the sake of reforming them; not only bore his passion and death from the hands of his enemies without returning evil for evil, but even offer'd his passion for those very enemies, and in the very height of his suffering pleaded in their behalf: * *Father forgive them for they know not what they do.* I imagin I shall be answer'd, that our Saviour was God, and therefore might do easily what is not so practicable for us. Idle reasoning! Our Saviour was and is God, 'tis true: But what he suffer'd, he suffer'd, not as God, but as man. As man he was infirm in body as we are, sensible of pain as we are; and capable of just resentment as we are; and yet as man he bore, not only his own infirmities, but those of his neighbours and even enemies: And therefore, by the help of his grace, which is ever at our call, we may easily bear the troublesome as he did, we may easily forgive injuries as he did. Else he would never have told us: † *I have given you*

an example, that as I have done, you also may do.

And so easy is this example to follow, that *St. Stephen* a mere man, a weak, tender, delicate man like any of yourselves, found no difficulty in copying it; but amidst a volley of stones could plead in behalf of the very enemies who were thirsting after his blood: * *O Lord lay not this sin to their charge.* What difficulties then can you reasonably alledge for being less merciful to the troublesome and injurious than he was? Ah Christians! How easy ought you not to think this task, if you reflect on the much God bears with, and forgives in, You? What toleration and forgiveness do not the Best of you all stand in need of from the Almighty mercy? If then his Divine Majesty is so infinitely gracious, as to put up with your numberless breaches of peace with him, and to forgive you the infinit score of punishments due to innumerable insults you have committed against him, on condition of your bearing with the faults and foibles of your neighbours, and forgiving them the evils they have done; O how easy ought you not to think the terms! And how unjustifiable must not you be, should you refuse to comply with them? You may say, that you cannot fast, that you cannot give alms to the needy, that you cannot harbour the houseless; and may possibly prove your words true at the general judgment. But if you say, you cannot bear patiently the troublesome, you cannot forgive; all the saints there will contradict you by their practice; the gospel will give you the lie; and the very heathens will put you to the blush. The saints will shew you how much greater faults they put up with, how many more and more grievous injuries they pardon'd in others, than you ever met with. The God who commands you to forgive, and promises that if you do forgive you shall be forgiven, will remind you of what in his gospel he tells you: *My yoke is sweet, and my burden light.* And the many instances of patience and forgiveness which pagan history affords, in a *Socrates* and many others, will be so many condemnations of your merciless obduracy.

There may be persons exempt from burying the dead: They may never meet with an opportunity of practicing so merciful an act. Or when they do meet with it, they may be so extremely feeble as not to be equal to the task, and so indigent withal as not to have one poor mite to contribute towards prompting others to it: And God, who commands not impossibilities, nor punishes involuntary omissions, will accept the deed of the heart for the deed of the hand and reward it accordingly. But who can in this life be so remote from human nature, so feeble, or so poor as not to be able to practice the work of mercy of praying for the living and the dead?

Let

* *St. Luke xiii.* † *St. John xii i.*

* *Acts vii.*

Let a man be thrown single upon an uninhabited island: He may nevertheless pray, and pray as fervently, for the rest of the species within reach of God's Mercy, as if he was in a congregation of thousands: He may still hold communion by prayer with the saints not only in heaven but on earth, not only triumphant but suffering. Let him be ever so weak in body, he may still pray: Let him be ever so poor, his poverty does not disable him from prayer. For a prayer out of a poor man's mouth reacheth to the ears of God, says Ecclesiasticus*. If he cannot kneel, he may pray on his feet; if he can neither kneel or stand, he can lift up his mind and heart to God in fervent petitions for mercy on the living and the dead: And that is the substance of prayer. Is he condemn'd to hard and incessant labour? Is he overpower'd with pains? Let him lift up his heart to God in the midst of his labours and devote a part of his toils to the throne of grace in behalf of his living and deceased neighbours. Let him make an altar of his couch or his sick-bed, and consecrate a part of his pains, in conjunction with those of his Saviour, to the Eternal Father, for the benefit of the souls of others as well as his own. Nor think, Christians, that there is any time wasted, any advantage lost in so doing. No, the time we employ in praying for others is so much time spent in labouring for eternity: The blessings we are craving for Them, revert to ourselves: And the very act of Mercy of soliciting advantages for a brother is a powerful prayer in our behalf, before the Almighty. What excuse then can Christians plead for any merciless neglect of so practicable a duty? Or what excuse at least will hold them guiltless in the sight of God? How unmerciful an obduracy must it not be, to suffer the Living to struggle under a weight of sin, or affliction, and the Dead to languish in the acutest pains, for want, perhaps, of our exerting ourselves in their behalf before the throne of God, with assiduous prayer? An act of Mercy which we may perform without loss of money, time, ease, or any other advantage: An act which we are capable of practicing in every circumstance; and which we ourselves have a joint interest in the practice of?

You see then, Christians, what you have to trust to. You have already heard and been terrified at the judgment which threatens you, and I have here laid before you, the Means to avoid the terrors you were shock'd at. Life and Death, you find, are at your own option. If you prefer misery to happiness; continue to neglect, as too many of You perhaps have hitherto done, these *Spiritual Works of Mercy*. And prepare for the dread

Sentence which you have already heard: *Go, Ye Cursed, into Everlasting Fire. For Judgment without Mercy shall be to you who have not done Mercy.* But, if you chuse Blessings before Curses; be merciful as your heavenly Father also is merciful, that you may eternally exult in that rapturous Invitation, *Come ye Blessed of my Father. For Blessed are the Merciful, because they shall obtain Mercy.*

God's immutable Truth, is your guarantee for the One and the Other; and his Justice and Mercy are concern'd to give you your Choice of either: It is wholly your interest not only eternal but temporal to fix your Choice well. God has no interest in your happiness or misery, in-as-much-as, when you have done the best you can; the Best of you are still but *useless Servants*. It was for your own interest he communicated his Goodness to you: And therefore to allure you to it, by every consideration, he has graciously made even all your temporal Advantages dependent on, and, in some measure, inseparable from, your eternal duties. This is so true, that Your Preservation and Happiness in this Life (and this is the case with every other individual in the species) absolutely depend under God, on the concurrence of Others in the practice of *Works of Mercy* towards you; and consequently it must immediately concern you to promote that practice by your example, in the Works of Mercy you practice towards Others: Thus evidently is it your temporal as well as eternal interest to be merciful to your neighbours in their several distresses, and so much more especially their *spiritual* ones as *these* are of infinitely superior importance to all the rest. None of them however can be of any eternal advantage to you unless your principal motives of acting be eternal. And can You want eternal motives, when you consider the eternal rewards which are promised You, the noble example which has been given to you, and the easy task which is set you? Is it little to be made princes and monarchs; to reign in a plenitude of power, peace and plenty; to be absorb'd in glory; to feast on substantial blis with angels; to be made Children of God, nay gods yourselves in some sense? Now all this is promised you in recompence for a little mercy to your fellow creatures: *I say you are gods, says Christ, and all of you children of the Most High.* Is it little that your God has condescended to be your example, as he himself tells you, *I have given you an example, that, as I have done, so you also may do.* And what a lively example is he not of every act of mercy; His Incarnation, his Birth, his Life, his Doctrines, his Passion and his Death were all so many acts of *Spiritual Mercy* practiced to us; not

to mention the merciful hint he gives us, to imitate him, in the words of my text, where he remits the Baptists for a proof of his Divinity to the works of his Mercy, in that *The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are made clean, to the poor the gospel is preach'd.* Ah Christians! for shame then, be not obdurate to the spiritual necessities of your brethren. Procure sight for the blind, by bringing the ignorant to the light of Christian knowledge: help the lame to walk by bearing with their failings and infirmities: Make the leper clean, by restoring him with prudent correction, or reproof, from the sickness of sin, to the health of grace and virtue: Teach the poor in purse to be poor in spirit: dissipate his doubts with the sun-shine of Gospel truths; and preach to him patience, fortitude, resignation to the Divine Will in his afflictions. Let not your mercy to the Dead be confined to their bones; nor your tenderness for the Living be bounded to their bodies. But much more be merciful to their souls, by the fervency and assiduity of your prayers: For *is not the soul more than meat?* If you pride yourselves in being disciples of Christ; glory in copying after him. Shew not, by your disuse of these virtues, that you are scandalized in your heavenly Master; that you are offended at what you ought to adore. *For blessed is he, says Christ, who is not scandaliz'd in me.* In short, Beloved, if you mean not to be a scandal to him; imitate your merciful Saviour in the noble exercise of these spiritual Works of Mercy in this Life; and you will have

no cause to fear his approaches in quality of a rigorous Judge in the next.

But O Reflection! how dost thou desert me! Shall a miserable sinner, like me, under protection of the Holy Function of Priesthood, thus dare to insult a whole army of the Living God (a pious, charitable troop of orthodox Christians) with exhortations to a God-like virtue, which, they must want souls, could they want the spirit to practice? No, no: 'Tis an outrage not to be offer'd to disciples of Christ. But, pardon, Gentle Catholics, pardon the undesign'd affront. Away, misapplied zeal, away! Go, rouse the blush of miscreants, and not the just resentment of Believers. Let *Hereticks* be shamed into compassion: Let *Infidels* and *Jews* be gaul'd into humanity: Let Mercy, in a word, be preach'd to savages, to canibals, and tygers. You are profest followers of a merciful Saviour, who are one day to sit with him in seats of Judgment, to judge the Tribes of *Israel*. Jesus, the God of all Mercy, leads the way before you to the heroic practice of every Spiritual Work of Mercy: How then can you forbear to follow him, you who expect and wish to reign with him? And O! *I would to God you did reign*, as St. Paul says, *that We also might reign with you in those eternal mansions of unutterable bliss, which are prepared for the Merciful from the foundation of the world;* and which I beg God to lift you to: *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

ON THE

THIRD SUNDAY in ADVENT.

St. JOHN i. 22.

Who art thou? What say'st thou of thy self?

THERE is nothing, perhaps, Beloved Fellow Christians, more conducive to the advancement of social happiness, nothing more capable of extending the communicable benefits of human society, than a mutual complacency and reciprocal deference of it's several individuals to one another. On the reverse, there is nothing more destructive to society in general than the arrogance of self-esteem. For, as an eminent modern writer observes, "Men will not continue long in any asso-

ciation, where they are likely to be the dupes of each-other." This however will always be the case in all bodies of men, whether religious or civil, whose private members pay more regard to their own inclinations, or interest, than to the public good. And how shall this pernicious evil be prevented, as long as any one member considers himself of greater importance than the rest of his fellows? Unless every individual is convinced of his being but a part, and that an unnecessary part too, of the whole he is member of; some will be contending for the superiority over others; the least active will fall the dupes of the most artful: And tho' the opposite parties may seem to agree, the one

one in usurping, the other in giving up, the ascendant; yet they, who are the first to resign the precedency, will be the last to part with that cankerworm of social peace, the spirit of jealousy. Every one will be question'd by, and retorting the question on, the rest: "You? who are you?" till every member forgets his separate function, and all unite only in leaving the general good to the rust of suspension: A union which cannot but end in the utter dissolution of the whole.

The HOLY GHOST therefore, Christians; He, who first inspired mankind to cement themselves together in charitable society, to ward you against the detrimental consequences, and growing mischiefs of self-pointed arrogance, provides you with an infallible preservative against it in the gospel for this day: Drawing at once, from the mouths of the *Jews*, a matter of confusion for themselves, and a useful hint of instruction for you, in that mysterious interrogation, *Who art thou?* It is an insolent question of stiff-necked *Jews*. And yet may be of infinite service to every one of you, beloved, if you will but make use of it. But then have a care, that you do not make the same idle use of it, as the *Jews* did with regard to St. *John*. Apply it: Yet apply it not to an inquisition into the merit of others, but to an enquiry into yourselves. Say not to others, with the busy, prying, envious part of mankind, "Who are you?" But rather with the humble Baptist, catch the lantern from the world; descend into the deepest recesses of your own souls; and say, Each to yourself: "Come, my heart! We are now alone: Throw off the mask, let me see, let me hear, let me know, *Who art thou?*" "What say'st thou of thyself?"

This, Christians, this is the great Lesson, it behoves you all to learn: This is the science worthy of Men, of Christians, and of members of Catholic Communion, to know yourselves thoroughly: And without this, all your other knowledges are ignorance. This therefore shall be the subject of my present discourse, and the next: For the clearing up of which, it will be necessary to lay down this one distinctive Truth, that every man may be consider'd in a twofold light, either as a member of human society, or as a single separate existence from the rest of individuals in the same species. This premised I shall endeavour to shew you three things: *First*, how detrimental it must be to himself and others, for any man, consider'd as a member of society, to live in self-ignorance: *Secondly*, how important it is for every man, consider'd barely as a separate individual, to have a competent knowledge of himself: And *Thirdly*, What a competence of self-knowledge consists in. The two *first* considerations will require all the leisure this morning affords us; and the *Last* will furnish ample matter of instruction for your attention next Sunday.

To-day we are to view man in two distinct lights; as a Part and as a Whole; as the part of a great world, and the whole of a little one; in a word, as a part with relation to the whole of human society, and as a separate whole abstracted from every relation to other individuals. And in these two points of view we shall find:

- I. How dangerous it is for him to want a competent knowledge of himself: and
- II. How important for him to possess such a knowledge.

"Come then, O HOLY GHOST, light to the blind and life of all who live! Vouchsafe to be our guide in this research. Clear up our minds and warm our hearts with the benefic rays, that, seeing how much the happiness of knowing Thee depends upon the knowledge of ourselves, we may, with truly christian candour, search our souls, and sweep our spirits faithfully with *David*, till we deserve to find Thee there."

I. SOCIETY, as St. *Thomas* of *Aquin* defines it, is an aggregation of men agreed in the joint pursuit of one end: *That is*, as the very word imports, It is an association of many equals of the same kind, contracted for the mutual advantage of the several particulars uniting: All mankind then, strictly speaking, are but one great society, cemented together by the bands of mutual friendship, for the support, security, propagation, temporal and eternal happiness of one-another: And this society, if it be considered only with regard to the advantages it pursues in this life, is what we call a body civil, *that is*, in short, a coalition of rational beings, all capable, in different spheres, of contributing to the prudential good of one-another, as far only as earthly felicity extends. But it is a religious body, if we consider it with respect to the heavenly joys it is created to pursue: And in both senses it is a body politic, *that is*, in other words, a body actuated and subsisting by policy or wisdom; with this difference only, that, in the *first* sense, the policy which rules it is human; in the *second*, it is divine.

Now, analogously speaking, it is with a body politic, whether barely civil, or civil and religious, as it is with a merely physical one, such as that which every one of us carry about with us. A physical body has limbs and members and joints: So has the politic, these bodies of ours have limbs. The legs and the arms are such. These limbs have their under-members; from the shoulder to the elbow is one; from the elbow to the wrist is another; the hand is another; and the several fingers are so many more: These members again have their joints, and each joint has it's separate use: Over these there are eyes, there are ears, a heart and a head.

head. All these have their several functions, and on the mutual harmony and subordination of all depends the health, vigour and beauty of the whole. Let the least of these be ever so little disorder'd, the mutual dependance of All upon one-another is so intimate, that the rest must be affected more or less; tho', perhaps, insensibly at first: And for little it encreases, a stagnation ensues in the part first affected; the free circulation of the blood is interrupted; and an inflammation, fermenting the whole mass, spreads itself through the body. What destruction then may not ensue, when any disorder arises in the more noble parts, such as the eyes, the ears, the heart, or the head: or any of these desert their own office to break in upon the function of another? Much more, what must become of the body; should any one of these, envious of the rest, want to usurp the uses of all. St. Paul reasons beautifully upon this, *The body*, says he, *is not one member but many. If the foot should say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body: is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body was the eye; where is the hearing? If the whole was the hearing; where is the smelling? But now GOD hath set the members, every one of them in the body, as he would. The eye cannot say to the hand, I need not thy help; or again the head to the feet, you are not necessary for me. But much more those which seem to be the more weak members of the body are more necessary. But GOD hath temper'd the body, giving to that which wanted the more abundant honour, that there might be no schism in the body, but the members together might be careful one for another. And if one member suffer any thing, all the members suffer with it. Or if one member glory, all the members rejoice with it.*

Thus, Christians, you see, from St. Paul, how absolutely the very existence of this physical body depends upon the mutual subordination of its members. And thus is it too with the body politic of human nature. That is composed of kingdoms and common-wealths, which are, in a manner speaking, the limbs of society: The cities and boroughs of these are like so many lesser members: All which are composed and compacted of many individuals, who are the necessary joints of the whole community of mankind: The social integrity of which depends upon the well-doing of all, and every one, of these, and their steady pursuit of their respective functions in life. The least of them all has his separate usefulness, and the noblest of all cannot say to him, "You are unnecessary." No, adds St. Paul, *You are, all of you together, the body of*

1 Cor. xii.

Christ, and members of member. But are all of the same use then, All fit for the same functions? *Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all doctors? Are all rulers?* No: says the Apostle, *GOD hath set in the Church, first, apostles, secondly, prophets, thirdly, doctors; then helps, governments, and so on.* In short, Christians, GOD has made some for one employ, some for another, and all to contribute some way to the public good of all. Some he has placed in a more laborious station, to be, like feet, the necessary support of society: Others he has placed in a state of greater ease, and, like hands, to administer to the nourishment and defence of the whole. Some he has made magistrates, who, like eyes, are to inspect and direct the inferior members: And some are made subjects; to listen to the voice of the legislature, as a body civil, or to the instructions of GOD's ministers, who are as the mouth of religious society. *The eye then, as St. Paul says, cannot say to the hand, I need not thy help; nor the head to the feet, you are not necessary for me.* No, all are of use to each-other in their several capacities: Some as apostles and teachers, some as taught; some to labour for the rich, some to reward the labours of the poor; some to govern, and some to be governed. All which are directed by those two great internal faculties reason and conscience; as these again are, when rightly disposed, by grace and free-will: Which the Almighty has purposely set over this great society of human nature, the one as the head to guide it to good, the other as the heart to pursue the good pointed out. And so essential is subordination in the several parts of this body, that the least inversion of it, the least disorder in the meanest of its members, threatens the whole with confusion; and if that disorder increases, there is no other way to preserve the trunk than by lopping off the members infected. This has been too often and too fatally experienced, to stand in need of proofs. The corruption of one man has spread itself through whole cities, and would have infected the whole world the same, had not the Divine Goodness to spare the bulk of mankind, cut the rotten from the quick. Witness the detested cities of *Sodom* and *Gomorra*: Whose perdition undoubtedly was originally owing to the brutal iniquity of one single wretch; not to mention the deluge of miseries, which one man's sin propagated to millions, drowned the world in, many years before.

So very detrimental then may it be to himself and to others, for any man to deviate from his proper sphere as a member of society. And how shall any man know how to act in his sphere, without knowing himself and knowing, of what use he is or may be to society? All the harmony or discord which occurs then in any society, absolutely depends

upon

upon self-knowledge or the want of it in the members of that society.

Had *Lucifer* but known himself thoroughly; had he but reflected as much on his being but a creature, and indebted to God for the perfections he possess'd, as he did on those endowments which render'd him superior to the rest of the heavenly host; had he, in a word, seriously question'd himself after his first emotions of pride, "*Lucifer!* 'who art thou?' Ah Christians! he would never have impiously dared to compare himself with his maker: He would not have made it necessary for God to cut him off from the society of his blessed spirits: In short, he would not have sunk himself and such numberless legions of angels from a state of glory, to the wretched office of being our tempters to evil. But self-ignorance intoxicated him: He saw how much he transcended the rest of creatures; but would not see how infinitely short he was of God. Elated with his real pre-eminence, he must needs aspire to an ideal one. But, ---O what a one! "All creatures are inferior to me, and shall God be above me! No: * *I will ascend and become like the most high.*" But the Almighty soon undeceived him: And now he knows himself in his true light. But, alas, *Satan*, it is too late! Yet, ah Christians! How likely is this to be the case with many of you, unless you speedily enter into yourselves, with more sincerity and seriousness than, perhaps, you have hitherto done? You are all, like *Lucifer*, but too conscious of the excellences you possess; but how ignorant are you not of the many you want, to be what you ought to be! How ready are you, all, to lord it over your fellow creatures; and yet how slothful to humble yourselves before God. But alas, you are in this true Children of your Grandfire *Adam*.

O *Adam!* *Adam!* thoughtless Parent *Adam!* What was there wanting towards making thee the happiest of Creatures, but the knowledge of thyself? Created a favourite, a friend, and familiar of God, made to his likeness, and born to be transfer'd to a seat of Glory in Heaven from a Paradise on earth (a privilege now denied to all thy posterity,) what had'st thou more to wish? Must thou needs be like God, by knowing good and evil? Ah! how much wiser would one grain of knowledge of thyself have made thee; and how much more like God! Had'st thou but known thyself; thou would'st have known the infinit distance between God and thee; thou would'st have found, that the only way of being like him was to be content with the condition of subjection to him which he placed thee in; his grace would have improved his likeness in thee, and spared both thee and us, thy wretched offspring, the sad effects of thy self-igno-

* *Isaiah xiv.*

rance. But *Adam*, Beloved, was like us, and we are just like him, fond of nothing in, or out of, ourselves but what will fuel our insatiable pride.

In fact to what but pride and arrogance, the never-failing symptoms of self-blindness, can we impute our being more industrious to enquire into the merit of others than our own? 'Tis the vain conceit of possessing some superior excellence which others are, by us, supposed to want. 'Tis this prompts so many among us to that insolent question: *Who art thou?* In this we hope to glut our vanity, by exposing the defects of others and making them a foil to our own imaginary perfections. Whereas let us but retort the question on ourselves: Or let them but ask us in turn: "Who are you? What say you of yourselves?" And ah Christians! if the answers be fair on both sides; we may chance to find, that, for one imaginary advantage we have over the man we most despise, he has a hundred real ones over us. And yet neither he nor we can have a right to undervalue one-another as useless. Nor can we do it, without mutual detriment to ourselves and society.

There are but *five* things in which one man can claim an advantage over another,---riches, beauty, power, wisdom, and grace: Not one of which however can entitle any one single member of human society, to value himself more than the least of his fellow members. Nay all these, united in one person, are not sufficient to make him, in the strict sense, more necessary than some who may want the major part of these excellences, or be greatly deficient in all. For head as, he may be, or deserve to be; he cannot therefore say to the humble feet of society: *You are not necessary for me.* And nothing but the grossest self-ignorance can induce him to think so.

Nebuchadnezzor had riches, but had not self-knowledge; and therefore was weak enough to forget his proper function in life, and to drown the real monarch in the mimic deity. Instead of acting like the true head of his people, and drawing them to the knowledge of his and their Maker; he set himself up for their God and drew them into idolatry. But ah foolish monarch! When we see thee in the desert, licking the dust with the beasts of the field, how much more wilt thou appear thyself? Tell us then from thence, *What art thou? What say'st thou of thyself?* Alas, (*methinks, I hear him cry*) alas, I am but a creeping thing upon the earth: A wretch beneath the very beasts I commune with. They, created beneath me, know themselves enough to act in their own sphere; I, created above them, know so little of myself, that, by aspiring above my nature, I have sunk myself beneath it." Alas unhappy Prince!

Prince! what a pity is it thou did'st not know thyself a little sooner? Had'st thou at first enter'd seriously into thyself, with a *Nebuchadonozor*? *who art thou?* What a deal of confusion might'st thou not have spared thyself! Thou had'st humbled thyself before thy God, and made it unnecessary for him to humble thee to a level with the brutes of the forest: Thou had'st wisely led thy people to his worship and not been reduced to leave them for seven years, like a lifeless trunk without a head, or rather, like the motionless feet of an inanimate carcass. O Christians, Christians! Shall I pique your pride, and compare you with this self-absent monarch? If God has humbled none of you as yet to an external level with the brutes; does not your own self-ignorance make many of you little superior to them in the gratification of your coarse-feeding appetites? Ah! enter then for once seriously into yourselves. Ask your souls; "Tell me, my soul? *what art thou?*" Thou who so much prides thyself above the rest of thy fellows! Thou, who, "because the head of thy family, despisest the feet of it, thy servants; or draggest them after thee, in triumph, to the worship of vice! Tell me, *what say'st thou of thyself?*" Hear what your souls have to answer, and if they tell you that you have follow'd this Prince in his sinful abuse of the goods of fortune and nature; follow him too in his repentance: Stoop with him to lick the dust of humility in the voluntary depression of yourselves.

Saul had power, *Absalom* had beauty, and *Solomon* had wisdom: But not one of them, alas not one, had a competent knowledge of himself. *Saul* reflected not, whence his power was derived; and therefore abused it to the dishonour of God, the elation of himself, and the depression of his people. *Absalom* consulted his mirror more than his conscience, as, perhaps, some of you do; else he might have seen, and so might you, how much a deformity of soul is capable of disfiguring the fairest of frames. *Solomon* was wise enough to see into all the vices and follies of the rest of mankind; but (ah!) with all his wisdom, he was foolish enough to live in self-ignorance; and for want of entering into himself, with a, *Solomon who art thou?* he saw not, how criminal his wisdom made him appear in the abuse of it. And what was the consequence of self-ignorance in these? Why the *first*, with all his race, was cut off from reigning over that people which his self-ignorance had drawn into so much sin and sorrow; the *second*, after having beguiled many of his fellow-subjects into his unnatural rebellion, fell, or rather hung, the unpitied victim of divine vengeance: And the last, after having exposed, and yet encouraged, vice and folly in others; after having, by bad example, ren-

der'd the wisdom he was inspired with by God useless, nay detrimental, to the salvation of many; after having, in a word, tho' the wisest of men, made the most foolish figure a mortal in his senses could make; died a parable of suspense, leaving his own salvation a matter of doubt to posterity. Alas! What then can riches, beauty, power or wisdom avail any member of human society, who, for want of self-knowledge to apply them rightly, only abuses them to the ruin of himself and others?

What served you, O senseless inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, the repetition of graces and heavenly favours shower'd on you by the Almighty? What avail'd you the being born cotermporaries with Christ, members of his favourite city, the seat of his elect, where he chose to manifest his redemption; when you would not know him? But ah! how should you know him, you who took no pains to know yourselves? O *bad'st thou but known*, says Christ to this perverse generation, * *bad'st thou but known, in this thy day, the things which pertain to thy peace!* But now they are hidden from thy eyes. Yes: Had the Jews but been each as diligent to enquire of himself *Who art thou? What say'st thou of thyself?* as they were in questioning the Baptist; they might have removed that self-ignorance, which, like an impenetrable fog stood between them, and the knowledge of their Saviour; they would have been enabled to open their eyes to behold him, their minds to believe in him, and their hearts to receive him; they would have still been his darling people and joy'd in the salvation he came to work among them. Instead of which, what are they now, but mere outlaws of heaven, vagabonds upon earth, and, by the express judgment of the Divine Justice, banish'd from the religious society and even civil communion of all the rest of mankind; become the abhorrence of Christians, the mockery of Heretics, the working-tools of infidelity, and objects of suspicion, reproach and infamy to one-another. Hence, beloved brethren, you see how very detrimental to himself and others it is and must be for every mortal, consider'd as a member of human society, to live in self-ignorance. Now therefore let us employ the little time we have left, to consider:—How important it is for every man, consider'd barely as a separate individual, to have a competent knowledge of himself.

II. I need not detain you long upon this head, Christians: So be not alarm'd for your freedom and ease. What I have already said in the former part of this discourse, will in great measure serve, by the rules of analogy, to prove and illustrate this. Mankind is not only a numerous world, but an associati-

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* Luke xix.

on of worlds. Every individual is not only the part of a great world; but a little world in himself. And this little world has not only a physical body in itself which is the flesh, but a body politic, both religious and civil, composed of the senses as so many inferior members, an imagination, a memory, and other internal faculties superior to these, and reason and conscience the eyes and guides of the rest, with free-will and grace like the head, and the heart to preside over and give life to the whole. While these then preserve their proper subordination, there must be a perfect harmony within us. But if any one of these forgets it's proper function, encroaches upon the province of the other, or suffers a stagnation of virtue; what but confusion and disorder must ensue? And how shall it be otherwise; if the soul, which is the intelligence by whom all are put in action, forgets, or desists from, it's office of watching perpetually over this little world with a kind of provident self-intuition?

How is it we preserve our physical body in health and vigour, but by constantly watching over it's constitution, to see that it's motions are regular, that each member performs it's functions in due order, and to apply a proper remedy where we discover the least want of one? So then ought we to do with the inward man, so ought we to watch over the constitution of the soul. If every man's body has a pulse to serve as an index of the harmony or disorder reigning in it; so has his soul. The *Intention* is the pulse of the soul. As that beats high with vanity or self-esteem, or low with sloth or dissipation; the soul is in a frenzy of pride and ambition, or in the decaying state of avarice or lust. But if it moves regular and moderate with humility and charity; then the circulation of virtue flows freely, the life of grace throbs warm in every part, and the whole interior realm of the soul enjoys harmony, peace, and plenty of substantial comforts. Yet how shall man be able to know, when it is so; or apply a timely remedy, when it is not so; without seriously watching over it's motions, often feeling the pulse of his intention, and thus gaining a perfect knowledge of the true disposition of it? Self-knowledge then cannot but be of the highest importance to every man, consider'd even as a separate individual.

For this we have no less an oracle than the Holy Ghost, who in the *Canticles* * presses nothing so much to his Spouse the Soul as a perfect knowledge of herself: *If thou art ignorant of thy self, O Fairest go forth.* "Yes, leave the state of ignorance thou art in; shake off thy spiritual drowiness; Flee the dark mist of self-absence thou art surrounded with, and go forth from dissipation; that, entering into thyself, thou may'st enjoy the

"pure and lightfome air of self-intuition." But ah! how few are there, who listen to the instructive voice of this Divine Charmer, charming so sweetly! How universally true is the complaint of *Jeremiah*, † and how applicable to the present unhappy age, *The whole world is fill'd with desolation, because there is no one who heartily reflects!* No one enters seriously into himself, nor thinks with sincerity on the inward state of his soul; and therefore all run headlong out of themselves. No wonder therefore, that so many of you are borne away by the tempestuous hurricanes of your unruly passions into such a state of inward confusion, as threatens you with, and is likely to end in, nothing less dreadful than, utter irreparable misery.

And yet, who can well refrain from being surprised, that this important self-knowledge, this necessary inward reflection, should escape any man; when every object of the senses reflects it to us all? The perpetual instability of every part of nature is one continued lesson to us of the uncertainty of our Being here. The day, the Night, the light of the one, and the gloom of the other are but so many hints to you to examen into the situation of your souls, to see whether grace makes all light within you, or whether sin has not over-spread the whole with darkness. Both remind you of life and death; and teach you, by a reflection on your mortal and immortal state, to make such use of the former, as may render the latter a blessing rather than a curse to you. The vicissitudes of health and sickness in human nature; It's fickleness in good; It's proneness to evil, and it's froward faintness in retreating from it: The poverty, sickness, and innumerable accidents which baffle the worldly pursuits of man, and often rob him even of himself: All are so many daily warnings to every one of you to enter into himself, with a, "Tell me my Soul who art thou? what say'st thou of thy self? Art thou not subject or liable at least to all these? Say then what use do'st thou make of them? Or how art thou disposed to encounter or bear them? Ah Christians! Would you but lay hold on these warnings; would each of you make these serious queries to yourselves; how soon and how brightly would the sun-shine of grace and self-knowledge break in upon you! With what fruitful surprise and confusion would not most of you find, how very much you are what you little suspect yourselves to be, and how very little you are what you all ought to be?

It was by the help of queries like these, that the Royal Penitent *David* was enabled to rise from the state of an adulterous murderer of man, and an enemy to God, which self-ignorance had plunged him into: To rise, I say, to such a perfection of self-knowledge as finish'd him the blessing of his people

† Chap. xii.

and a Man after God's own heart. While he absented from himself, he consider'd only the authority of the monarch, to abuse it. But once he enter'd into himself; he overlook'd the gaudy title of Prince, in the pride-depressing consideration of perishable man. Well, *David!* well glorious Prince! flourishing Monarch! *Who art thou? What say'st thou of thyself?* "Sovereign, Prince and Monarch!" "gay illusions all: I, O Lord, have nought to boast of, nothing to value myself upon," *My life, my substance; my all, is as nothing before thee.*"

What think you but a serious scrutiny of his soul could enable the Baptist to give so nice an account of himself? When the Jews came to play with that startling question, *Who art thou?* He answer'd them not inconsiderately. But, assuming the character of their ambassador to his soul, he enters into it's deepest recesses, and returns not thence till fraught with a satisfactory answer. "Come, my Soul, says *John* methinks, *Who art thou, that I may give an answer to them who sent me?—What say'st thou of thyself? Art thou the Messiah?* No; far from it: *the latest of his shoes I am not worthy to loosen.* Well: *Art thou Elias?* No: *I am not.* *Art thou a Prophet?* No. What art thou then: surely thou art something more than ordinary. No, no. *John* have a care of mistakes: have a care of depressing thy excellences by rating them too high. I thy soul tell thee, be humble. Go back then and tell those who sent thee what humility shall dictate to thee." Well, then *John*, what art thou. "Alas, I can scarcely be deem'd a something: I am but half a something: a breath, a voice, an eccho in a vast desert, that is, in a word, hardly one remove from nothing." I am a voice, says *St. John*, crying in the desert. Ah Christians! what next-to-nothings then must not you be, with all your fancied merit; if this prodigy of nature and grace is, at last but a voice? For *there has not risen, says Christ, a greater among the born of women, than John the Baptist.* O self-knowledge! of what importance art thou not to man?

It was undoubtedly this which made *St. Peter* decline the honour of having his feet wash'd by Christ. But! why would'st thou, O glorious Prince of the Apostles, reject the proffer'd honour? Did not the *Magdalen* wash the feet of Him, who stoops to do the same for thee. Yes, but the difference is wide. *Thou, Lord, shalt not wash my feet to eternity.* What! *Who art thou then, Peter!* "Ah! who indeed, O Lord, that thou should'st wash my feet? O tell me, *Peter*, tell me my soul, *who art thou?*" Here truth, like a flood of day, pours in upon his soul; and lifts him to a perfect

Psal. xxxix.

knowledge of himself. Away from me, Lord! Approach me not: Nor let the prophane, like me, mix with the Sacred as thou art. Thou art God: And I, alas, nothing but man; nay less than man, a sinner. Go out from me, Lord; for I am a man, a sinner. Thus, probably, as once before, *St. Peter* thought. And thence it probably was, that Christ then shew'd himself to him, brought him to a perfect union with himself by prompt obedience, and raised him, to the dignity of his substitute. Well, well did'st thou know thyself, O glorious saint, and to a happy purpose!

But ah dear Saviour! did'st Thou too know thyself in this stupendous act of self-depression? Did'st thou interrogate thyself beforehand, *Jesus who art thou?* Was't thou still mindful of the God, when kneeling humbly at the feet of men to wash them? Yes, Christians: Your Saviour knew himself, 'tis plain. He knew, that he was God; and yet forgot not, that he was also man. He knew, that he was Lord of those, whose feet he wash'd, and whom he often had instructed to be humble; and therefore knew, that nothing could add greater force to his precepts than example. Wherefore, says he, *Know you what I have done to you? You call me Lord and Master, and you say well: For I am so. If then I, being Lord and Master, have wash'd your feet, you ought to wash one-another's feet. For I have given you an example, that, as I have done, so you also may do.*

Such, Christians, such are the fruits of self-knowledge, humility, and charity: Such the sentiments of the saints, and of the Lord of saints: And such must be your sentiments, if you mean to be saints, like those, and disciples of him. Endeavour then, like those, to come at a perfect knowledge of yourselves, Enquire of yourselves, every one, "Who you are?" And you will soon find matter to humble yourselves beneath the rest of your fellow creatures in your own esteem, and to curb that insufferable arrogance which so often prompts you to claim advantages over them.

Next Sunday, I shall endeavour to make this important knowledge easy to you, by shewing you the nature of it. In the mean time, begin the study of it with this serious question, "Tell me, my soul, *Who art thou? What say'st thou of thyself?*" And if you do this with faithful earnestness, the influence of grace shall amply pay your labour, and even forestall all human instructions to you. Light then, O Spirit Divine, upon this people, and on me their Pastor: Grant us the grace to make a fruitful search into ourselves, that knowing what we are and becoming what we ought to be, we may attain to knowing, serving and possessing thee for ever. Which, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N

ON THE

FOURTH SUNDAY in ADVENT.

St. LUKE iii. 4, 5, 6.

The voice of one crying in the desert: Prepare the way of the Lord, make strait his paths: Every valley shall be fill'd, and every mountain and bill shall be made low; and crooked things shall be made strait and rough ways plain: And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

THE very same St. John, Christians, whose example lately led you to the important study of yourselves, is this day to lead you to the fruitful end of that study. This miracle in nature, tho' at last, nothing greater than a voice and a voice in a desert, is capable, if you have but spirit to follow him, of safely guiding you out of the trackless maze of self-ignorance you have hitherto lived in. Next-to-nothing, as he himself would be thought, do but listen to him with the attention which is due to him, *that is*, an attention made useful by the resolution of practicing what he teaches; and you shall all become something more than you are, something as great as I would have you all aspire to be. He came, the Gospel tells us, *preaching the baptism of penance to the remission of sins*; or, in other words, *he came teaching us such a serious scrutiny of ourselves, as, by discovering to us the heinousness of our sins, may lead us to a penitential sorrow for, and an intire remission of them.* Thus it is he bids you *prepare the way of the Lord, and make strait his paths.* Do but thus much then, Christians: Begin but *tedately* to look into yourselves; and ah! the words of the Prophet *Isaiah* shall soon be accomplish'd in you. *Every Valley shall be fill'd.* Yes: Every void in your hearts, every empty space in your minds, every deficiency in your souls, shall be fill'd up with virtue and grace by your future assiduity in good. *And every mountain and bill shall be made low.* For little you look into yourselves with an impartial eye, you will find nothing to engage your attention but what will be matter of the greatest humiliation, capable of lowering the most enormous extravagances of pride and ambition; nay sufficient to remove from you every the least temptation to vanity or self-esteem. For little you look into your souls, you will see what a wretched unevenness of con-

duct, what an irregular deformity of life your unruly passions have dragg'd you into: *And the crooked things shall be made strait, and the rough ways plain.* You will blush for yourselves, with shame of the false and flattering idea you had of yourselves. The time and ground which you will find to have been lost by the crookedness of your evil actions, or the distorted motives of your good ones, will shew you the necessity of making all strait again by repentance and perseverance. In a word. You will find it your interest to turn your backs upon vice; and the rugged paths of virtue, rugged only for want of being trodden, will, by frequent application, become smooth and render that interest a pleasure to you. Thus will you effectually *prepare the way of the Lord to your hearts and make strait his paths: And all Flesh, thus prepared, shall see the Salvation of God.*

Such, Beloved, such are the excellent fruits of self-knowledge; and without this they are not to be obtain'd. Let us but for a minute go back the way we have come, and this truth will appear more evident. According to the Prophet and the Baptist, for all *Flesh* to see the *salvation of God*, the rough ways must be made plain; the crooked things must be made strait; every mountain and bill must be made low; and every valley must be fill'd. In short the way of the Lord must be prepared and his paths straiten'd by penance to the remission of sins. That is, for Mankind to see the *Salvation of God*, they must practice virtue into ease; they must change the crookedness of vice for a straitness of piety; they must lower arrogance to humility, and fill up the void of spiritual neglect with the fervor of grace. In a word, they must prepare a strait and even way for the Lord to their souls by such a serious inspection into themselves, as, by a fervent and constant repentance, may render them worthy of the remission of sins which he comes to afford them.

Self-knowledge then, you see, Christians, is the first step to the *Salvation of God*. We cannot therefore be saved without some degree of it. O important science! How very needful art thou, and yet how very much neglected! But ah! What knowledge of ourselves, my God, can be sufficient to diff'us to the joyful and prepared? Is it the bare-

ly knowing our pedigree, perfections real or fancied, our family, or condition? Whether we are noble or plebeian; rich or poor; or strong or weak; or fair or homely? In honour or disgrace with man? No, my friends, No: It matters little how you stand with men. The great important care of life should be, how you appear in the Almighty's sight. To appear with advantage in the eyes of men; there needs but a little dissimulation. They see but the outside of things and judge but by appearances: And therefore, if you have but art enough to conceal from their observation the vices you commit, and to put on the bare affectation of the virtues you want; you may cheat them into applause and trick them out of their esteem. On the contrary, if you have too little worldly cunning and too much gospel-simplicity, to know, how to reconcile the outward effects of your inward piety with their depraved notions of virtue; acceptable as your actions may be to God, they will only draw upon you the hatred and contempt of the giddy world. But God is not to be imposed upon, nor can he be mistaken. He searches *the reins and the heart*. Neither your actions nor motives escape his penetration. He sees, as well what you really are, as what you ought to be; and will reward or punish you not according to your seeming, but your real, desert. As you appear before him, worthy or unworthy, you shall see, or not see, *the Salvation of God*. The only way then you have, to be spectators of that joyful light, is to commence from this instant spectators of yourselves, in order to find out these three important things: What you have been; what you actually are; and what you ought to be, in the presence of your ever-seeing all-seeing God. In this, Christians, consists the perfect knowledge of yourselves. This is the self-knowledge I would fain pique you to the study of. And this, I dare hope, you will all be eager to acquire, if you do but, along with me, in this discourse, consider the three different circumstances in which every man ought to view himself:

I. As a Man;

II. As a Christian; and

III. As a person engaged in one particular station of life.

"Great God, whose mercy made us for the noblest end! Afford us light to see what thou designed'st all to be; that, finding how extremely wide we are of answering thy all-gracious purpose, we may with future diligence atone for past neglects, deserve to be beheld by thee with favourable eyes, and thus be render'd worthy to behold ourselves, the joyful sight of thy salvation."

I. The *first* thing, beloved, which you are to consider in yourselves is your being in abstract, *as Man*. And what a field of reflection will not this open to you? Look but to the right, view the dignity of your nature; *and every valley shall be fill'd*: Turn to the left, view the degeneracy of that nature; *and every mountain and bill shall be made low*. Look up and take but a general survey of your souls, and the exalted glory they were created for; and a laudable ambition shall fire you to emulate an equality with Angels: Look down on your flesh, and the reptil condition your unruly passions have sunk you to; and your pride shall be humbled to the level with brutes. O my God! *What is man that thou art mindful of him?* * What a stupendous paradox is this being of mine! Little to a meanness, great to a pitch of Glory; despicably low, yet high as ambition can aspire; mortal and yet unperishable; at once both earthly and celestial: Mortal and earthly with the World, Immortal and heavenly with the God who made it: All littleness and lowness in the flesh; but in the spirit, all which is great and greatly noble.

Such then you are, beloved, every one, *as Man*; a creature form'd by God to his own blessed likeness, to be a sharer with him in eternal bliss. And that you might pursue the end for which you were created, he gave you, each, a soul immortal, great, aspiring to and fitted for a perfect union with it's Maker. But then, that it might not pervert the excellence of it's nature, like *Lucifer*, to a comparison with God, he gave it the pride-restraining curb of a corruptible body, little, impotent, mean and contemptible. In short, the perfections of the soul are so many spurs to the flesh, capable of spurring it up to the noble struggle after heavenly joys; and the meannesses of the body are so many bridles to the soul, to keep it within the humble dependences of a creature. Man, however, in the whole, as finish'd by his Creator, was originally a glorious Being; a resemblance of the Deity itself; next to the Angels in perfection; and destin'd to be, one day, intimately united to the *Former* and equal to the *Latter*. And to sum up his excellence with the emphatic conciseness of the royal Prophet, His Divine Creator made him little inferior to the heavenly Host, crown'd him with glory and honour, and appointed him over all the works of his Almighty hands. Mortality was not originally any part of his nature. No, "To this end, says *St Gregory*, "was he placed in Paradise, that closely attach'd to his Maker by the bands of obedience and love, he might thence be transfer'd without any taste of death, to the heavenly seats of the angels."

O glorious, exalted creature, man! What a no-

* *Psal. viii.*

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ble greatness was't thou first raised to, by thy Almighty Author! But Ah! What does the consideration of thy original greatness avail, but to render thee the more contemptible by comparison with the abject littleness thou art sunk to? The eminence, thou art fallen from, serves only to make thy folly more conspicuous, thyself more contemptible, and thy fall the more miserable. The matter of thy glory is become the subject of thy confusion. Alas, unhappy fickle creature man, rather let me say, who, *when he was in honour did not understand* * man was once in honour then! Yes, and O what honour! He had a paradise for his abode, a garden of delights for his pleasure; wide of want and a stranger to care, he was fed with the choicest fruits of the earth, refresh'd with the most fragrant flowers of the field, crown'd with glory and appointed over all the works of his Maker: But more honour'd on account of the divine image he bore in his breast, with the society of angels, and a degree of familiarity with God himself. But ah! he did not sufficiently weigh the honour done him; and therefore exchanged all this excellence for an ignoble likeness with senseless animals, and, by stooping to a comparison with brutes, *became like them*. † O deplorable change! What tears of blood can sufficiently bewail the downfall of this once noble being, from an inhabitant of paradise, the lord of the earth, the companion of angels, the intimate of the Almighty, the fellow-citizen of the blessed spirits above and joint heir with them to the joys of Heaven, now become by a momentary transformation, like a beast of burden, labouring beneath a load of infirmities, sensible as cattle to every want, and like untamed savages, tied down to coercive laws. Ah my God! Needless was it for the prophet to urge thee to what thou hast done. Already hast thou *with a muzzle and bridle tied up the jaws of man, who did not approach to thee*. ‡

Behold, Christians, behold your nature in it's original eminence, and tell me: What could be wanting to spirit it up to the sublimest union with God, happy as it was made, under the protection of unlimited power, under the tuition of eternal truth, under the government of infinite wisdom, and under the immediate influence of unbounded liberality? And then, if you dare consider it in it's present abject condition, behold it again, wretched as it is made, by the vices which enslave it, the falsehoods which beguile it, the follies which betray it, and the variety of wants, miseries and weaknesses which depress it. And after all, tell me, What is there wanting in the nature of man to humble it before God, to the profoundest degree of self-depression?

Whatever you might have been then, Christians,

* *Palm* xlviii. † *Pf.* xlviii. ‡ *Pf.* . xxxi.

enter but seriously into yourselves, and you will each of you find, that as man, you are now but an abject thing in the sight of God; abject in the vileness of matter you are composed of, for God *formed man of the slime of the earth*; * abject in the shortness of your duration, for *our time*, says the Wise Man, *is like the passing of a shadow* † And ah! how abject in the miseries you are subject to? *The man who is born of a woman, living but a short time*, says inspired Job, *is fill'd with many miseries*. Many miseries indeed, both in soul and body! Your soul, tho' of divine extraction, a breath of the Divinity, and an emanation of the essence of God; was no sooner out of the hands of the Almighty, if I may be allow'd the expression, than it immediately became the public enemy of it's Creator by the contagion of sin: And what has it now for it's appointments but folly, ignorance and proneness to sin? What is it, for little it is left to itself, but a slave to the devil, a dupe to the world, and (that which is still lower) a tool to it's own flesh? Is not here a mighty subject of vain-glory? And if you must think so meanly of your nobler part, what can you think of the ignoble? As to your body, it originally was nothing: It now is but earth; and, one day, must return to the inanimate meanness it sprung from.

Was I not afraid of making you peevish with yourselves, Beloved, I would shew you to yourselves in a glass, and such a glass as you will not find on every toilet. To you, O Females, let me talk: For you are call'd, and so you are, the fairest as well as the vainest Sex; You, I warrant, think yourselves composed of some celestial paste, made up of nothing less than the choicest flowers and gums and spices: But believe me you are mistaken; and that grossly too. You are but a second draught of Man: And what is Man? Why (as St. Bernard says) in his conception, he is the dregs of corruption; from his birth to his death, a little vessel of filth; and afterwards, the regale of insects. These, These are the charms, O mortals, which you have to glory in. Well then may mankind pride (may they not?) in the fairness of their frames, when form'd of the slime, the mire and dust of the earth, conceived of what ever is most corrupt in fleshly concupiscence, and what is vilest still, conceived in the pollution of sin; born to labour, to fear, to want, to sorrow; and, more wretched yet, born to die: Agents of follies offensive to God, offensive to man, and offensive to themselves; agents of evils, which stain their reputation, sully their persons, and pollute their consciences; agents of impertinence, who neglect the Safe, the Useful and the Necessary, for Danger, Detriment and Destruction.

Allow

* *Gen.* ii. † *Ecclesi.* vii.

Allow me here one word to you, O Methodistical fanatics of the age! Tell me, fond presumers on your own uprightness, what comes of all your empty boasts of purity? If you are men; whence comes your vaunted security from sin? If we might credit your fond dreams, you are sanctified; you, forsooth, can sin no more: And God himself can't damn you, or withdraw his grace from you. Horrid blasphemy! If this was so, or could be so, what becomes of you, O sacred inspiration! If these bold boasters, these self-confident presumers may thus bid Heaven defiance; in vain then, O great Apostle, do'st thou exhort the Man, *who standeth, to take heed lest he fall.* * But ah my God even Thou thyself hast told us, by thy Prophet, † that *man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred.* And are not you, O idle boasters, still men with all your conceited sanctity? Are you more holy than David, who tells us, that *all men are liars.* ‡ Are you purer than Isaiah, who proclaims all human nature to be filth? Are you more sanctified, more confirm'd in grace, than St. Paul, who, tho' a Vessel of Election, was still prone to sin in the flesh; and therefore under the necessity of chastising his body and bringing it under subjection, || *lest subtile be preached to others, he himself should become a reprobate?* Are you wiser than Almighty Wisdom who tells you, that, *All are unjust and their works vain?* O my God, what arrogance is this! No wonder Lucifer should aspire to an equality with thee; if wretched, reptil man, shall dare to usurp thy graces into property and rob thee of the power of deserting him. Shall sinful man retain his sinful flesh, and boast of purity? No, rather let me (with wiser Job †) *say to corruption, thou art my father; and to worms, thou art my mother: Thou art my sister.*

Thus, Christians, thus Little will you appear to yourselves; if you, each of you, consider your Being, as Man. What room then will you find for vanity, arrogance, and self-esteem? Or rather what matter will not this consideration afford you of the profoundest humility? Philip, the father of Alexander, after his victory over the Athenians, finding himself disposed to be elated with success, and considering the dangers of such a capital mistake, appointed one of his attendants to wake him every morning with this important caution: "Remember, O King, Thou art not God, but a Man, obnoxious to many frailties, and exposed to a variety of Evils." O Christians! What a Lesson is this for a Pagan to give! What a reproach is it for Christians to neglect it? Shall it be said, a Heathen has outdone you? No, enter into your souls, and be yourselves your own monitors.

* 1 Cor. x. † Ecclesiastes ix, see the Latin Vulgate.
‡ Psalm cxv. || 1 Cor. ix. † Chap. xvii.

Say to yourselves each morning when you wake: "Remember, my soul, thou art not God impeccable, or independent. No: Thou art Man dependant on him, for all the blessings thou this day can'st want or covet. Deserve those blessings then, by faithfully complying with his will. Remember thou art Man, subject to temptations and liable to every external misery: Stand then upon thy guard, to resist the one, and bear the other with faith and fortitude." Repeat this memorandum when you lay you down: Repeat it on every occasion, where it is needful. Are you disposed to be elated by prosperity? "Ah my Soul! Remember thou art not God the donor of it, but accountable to him for the use thou make'st of it. Thou art but Man liable to future adversity, subject to fall from all thy present Affluence, or subject to abuse, and suffer for it, without end." Are you deprest by adverse fortune? Cheer up your souls again: "Remember, my soul, thou art not God, and therefore not impassible. As thou art Man, thou must be liable to evils: It is by bearing such with fortitude and constancy, that thou shalt one day be united with thy God." Are you tempted to sin? Cry out to yourselves in the abundance of your danger. "Remember, my soul, who thou art. These base suggestions prove, thou art not God; too loudly they proclaim thee Man, corrupted, sinful Man. Yes thou art Man, for-ever in the sight of thy Creator, who is ready to assist thee if thou callest on him, and able to chastise thee if thou offendest him. Go then, if thou must sin, where he may not perceive thee. But ah my God! Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? and whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven? thou art there: If I descend into hell; thou art present. * If I take my wings early, and dwell in the extreme parts of the sea; even thither also shall thy hand conduct me; and thy right hand shall hold me. Wilt thou my soul then dare to abuse the Goodness which cherishes thee, insult the Power which upholds thee, and set at defiance the Author of thy life and motion, Man, Worm and Reptil as thou art."

These, Christians, these are the Reflections which will arise from your considering seriously, what you are as Man. Be mindful then, ah! Be always mindful, that you are men.—And yet forget not that you are also Christians.

II. If the consideration of your Being, as Man, is a matter of humiliation to you; what a subject of glory and heavenly ambition may you not find in the happy consciousness of being Christians! A

* Psalm cxiii.

Christian is One, who, regenerated in Christ by the Spirit of God, crucifying his flesh with his vices and concupiscences, and leading a holy life of Faith and Good-Works, is daily advancing more and more to Life Everlasting. To this end, O Beloved, has God call'd you to the Communion of his Church. To this end, has he been profuse in his supernatural favours to you; in the gifts of grace, Inspirations, theological virtues, holy Sacraments and other efficacious means of Salvation, which you enjoy in common with his Elect: Favours all of infinit value; favours not bestow'd on every nation, and favours, alas more is the pity, withheld from millions in this unhappy land through their own perversity. But ah dearest Christians! What will all these blessings avail even you, to whom they are indulged, if you slight or abuse them? Sound your souls then and see, what use you put them to. You firmly believe in Christ and his Church! Alas! That alone is the least part of your duty, as Christians! Vain is all your faith, tho' ever so firm, if not enliven'd by Good-works. Why are you taught to believe? Only for the sake of believing? That would be an idle faith. It would be less absurd not to believe, than to believe and not practice.

Recollect what I lately told you, beloved: The devils themselves believe and tremble. In what then do you excell them, if you do no more? You believe and fear God, I make no question. But ask your souls: Is your fear of God holy enough to produce in you works worthy of your belief? If not, you are Christians in vain. For *not every one who say'th to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven; but he only who doth the will of my Father, who is in Heaven.*

The Jews in the days of the prophets confess'd the Lord to be their God: Yet, alas, their faith was but of greater condemnation to them; because while they honour'd God with their lips, they denied him with their actions, and were estranged from him by the perversity of their hearts. *This people, says the Lord, I honour me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.* Is this verified in none of you? You all profess the name of Christ, were baptized in his Name, in his Name renounced all commerce with the devil, the world and the flesh: You all pray in his Name, and hope for salvation in his Name. But have your lives been answerable to your baptismal vows, or do your hearts keep pace with your lips in his honour? Then, Christians, these are heads you are to examine yourselves upon, as Christians. And all what subject of confusion will not many of you meet with in yourselves? If you compare your profession with your practice, what valleys of emptiness and spiritual

Matth. vii.

Malab. xxi.

neglect will you not find, wanting to be fill'd up with virtue and grace! If you compare the rigour of your calling with the delicacy of your lives; what mountains of pride and self-esteem, will you not find it requisite to make low! You will find the necessity of straitening the crookedness of your lives, and treading the rugged paths of virtue 'till they grow smooth and plain by custom. You will reflect that the life of man, and much more of a Christian, is a perpetual warfare, inconsistent with the sloth and ease you have, perhaps, hitherto inordinately studied to indulge.

"The life of a Christian man," (says St. Maximus,) if he lives according to the Gospel, is one continued cross and martyrdom." O Christians! You are but delicate soldiers then; if you want to conquer without a struggle, to triumph without a combat. Fight therefore and fight manfully; engage warmly in the struggle after eternity: Be mindful of your engagement; keep your conditions in view; and look to the war you have to maintain. In baptism, you engaged yourselves by vow, to resist the devil, the world, and your perverse flesh: On these conditions you were promised eternal glory: And this is the war you have to carry on. It was the like engagement induced those glorious saints, whom you so much admire and envy, to struggle as they did: It was in virtue of the same conditions they conquer'd, and by the same warfare they now triumph. If then you like their triumph; imitate their fortitude, copy their constancy. Know then, O Christians, to everyone I say it, know the greatness of your dignity; and if you have hitherto through self-ignorance forfeited your glory, by staining your baptism; recover yourselves from your fall. Enter into yourselves from this day forward: Prepare a new way in your hearts for the coming of Christ, by the regeneration of a thorough repentance, which self-knowledge will help you to. And if hitherto you have debased your christianity, by acting as sinful men; repair the injury done to God and yourselves, and restore your manhood to its original excellence by acting as perfect Christians.

III. To do this however it will be necessary to examine yourselves yet farther in order to find out, not only how you live as Christians in general, but even as persons engaged in a particular station of life. There are many states, various functions, and very different occupations in the great family of Christ's holy Church. Some are princes, prelates and magistrates; others subjects. There are some noble, some plebeian. There are none of the nobility here, I presume. They alas, are too generally estranged from God from the wombs of their mothers to vouchsafe to come within reach

of God's word, especially in such an humble place as this. There are no gaudy appearances here, to invite them: No, they would blush (and no wonder they should blush) to be caught coming to, or going from, such a mean place as this poor modern *rashcomb*, a hated contrast to their sumptuous habitations. Enough is it for such Christians to come hither, as are not ashamed of following their Master through the homely paths of littleness and humiliation. The rest must wait till Christ shall strike into another road and seek them in their palaces, and pompous dwellings. But you, dear auditors, are not accountable for their neglects: The reproving them will be no improvement to you; and therefore let me leave them to the self-oblivion they are so fond of. Still,—among you, here are rich and poor; some parents, others children; some masters, and some servants: Here are young and old; some married, some unmarried; engaged in business and free from it.

Tell me then, O rich! Do you reflect, how hard it is for you to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven with all your affluence about you? Or if you reflect, do you endeavour to thin yourselves sufficiently, by alms-deeds and works of mercy to the poor; that you may be able to pass the narrow gate? Say, O ye indigent! To what good use do you apply your poverty? Without both industry and patience, it will avail you nothing. 'Tis not the poor in purse alone; but 'tis the poor in spirit who shall be blessed. Parents! I make no doubt but you are tender to your children, and anxious for their education. But ah! What is the tenderness you shew? What is the education which you give? Is it tender in you to indulge them in every foolish humour; in follies which will ripen but too soon into vices; to give them up to their own wills, while infants; and when a little more advanced, to treat them more like tyrants than like parents, for foibles which not so much themselves as you have rooted in them? Is it tender in you to swear, defraud, and lie, and set them the example of such scandalous irregularities, as you cannot but chastise them for when they shall imitate you? If little master has but learnt to dance, to fence, to speak a little *Latin*; (pardon this repetition of a truth so lately told you, so needful to be often told) you (Fathers!) think you have given him an ample education. If miss can cut an easy figure at a ball, play a soft tune, dress with an air, and work some pretty trifle; you (Mothers!) think their education finish'd. Poor babes! How are they sacrificed to the pride and folly of a parent's false misguided love! If these accomplishments are necessary for the world; are there no others necessary for God and for themselves? Is there no Catechism to be learnt; no piety to be instil'd, no prudent Christian caution to be given against an en-

snaring world? Or are all these of less importance? How shall their minds and hearts be fortified with grace and virtue, to make them happy here and blest hereafter, while you neglect the religious part of their education or think it less material? Whatever other pains you take then, neglecting this, you cannot truly love them. You only verify the prophet's words: * *The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.* You children, little or grown up! Whatever faults your parents may commit, are still to obey. You'll tell me, perhaps; So you do. *Yes*: But do you obey with cheerfulness, or only because you must? Know you not the honour God has done to obedient children? Yours is the only Commandment of all the ten, to which God has annex'd a blessing, not only to be happy in another world, but even in this. Obey your Parents then in all but sin, *that you may be long-lived in the land, which the Lord your God will give you.* †

Servants and prentices! Remember, that, while you are fed, instructed and receive the wages of your labour, you owe obedience, love and faith, and honour to those you serve. Examine then, as Christians, how you acquit yourselves of this great duty? But you, O Masters and Mistresses, will take care enough of that, or not maintain them. Yet are you as careful to cherish, instruct, reward, correct them, and set them good examples? Do you, O married people, love one-another with the same tenderness with which Christ loved his Church, as St. Paul commands? Live you like married Christians, in peaceful emulation, which shall out-do the other in love, respect, complacency; compassion for each-other's failings, and every social virtue? Or do you not rather, like coupled Demons, reciprocally try to aggravate each-other's misery? You, who are young, do you revere old age? Do you employ your youth in studying to acquire virtuous habits? And you, who are advanced in age, what good example do you set to youth? What pains do you take to repair the follies of your own former lives, the many years you have spent, if not in vice, perhaps in vain? tradesmen and merchants! dare for once to snatch a minute from the world, and ask your souls: Are you both charitable and free from every fraud? If so, happy are you; yet happier still, if worldly gain has not the upper-hand of Heaven in your hearts. You, who are free from worldly cares, how do you fill up life? With prayer or play? With acts of piety or slothful trifling?

Ah! Remember, all, that you are men, with souls immortal, tho' immersed in flesh; and tho' prone to evil, yet capable by grace of all that's nobly virtuous. Remember, you are Christians, regenerated by the blood of Christ, to imitate him

* Prov. xii.

† Exod xx.

by

by crucifying your fleshly appetites. Remember every one, your station to fulfil it, as Christians ought to do. See, how you have hitherto complied with all these great essential duties. Happy for you, if you have nothing to reproach yourselves with on this score. 'Tis not for me to judge you, Christians; no, I rather wish, that you would be prevail'd upon to judge yourselves. This I may say however, that if you enter seriously into yourselves, you will probably find but too much occasion to fill up the void in your hearts, with a fresh recruit of virtue and grace, and to lower your pride with self-depression. For, to conclude in the words of my text, if you begin but to *prepare the way for the Lord to*

your heart, by such a penitential scrutiny as may render you worthy of a perfect *Remission of Sins*; the most faulty of you all shall grow up in virtue, and the most exalted shall grow humble at heart. *Every valley shall be fill'd, every mountain and bill shall be made low, and crooked things shall be made straight and rough ways plain.* The happy consequence of which is big with the most desirable comforts heart can wish, and is, that *All flesh*, which shall have wisely made use of this blessed self-knowledge, *shall see the salvation of God.* Which I beg God may be the portion of every one of you. *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

O N

SUNDAY within the OCTAVE

OF OUR

LORD'S NATIVITY.

St. LUKE ii. 34.

Behold, THIS is set unto the ruin and unto the resurrection of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be contradicted.

THAT this Divine Infant Jesus, beloved Christians, should be *set unto the Resurrection of many* was a sweet excess of goodness, worthy of a God of unbounded liberality. And tho' such an immensity of mercy to his useless undeserved Creatures, be infinitely above the ken of our limited nature; yet is there nothing in it which can or ought to surprise us, when we consider that it was the great end for which he humbled himself to the taking human flesh. How comes it then that his Divine purpose has not all it's effect? How comes it that Jesus is also *set to the ruin of many*? This Jesus, this God and Saviour of ours, (as St. Paul testifies, *) *will that all men be saved*, and therefore *gave himself a redemption for all.* Can God's purpose then be frustrated? No. Can he

* 1 Tim. ii.

be the author of inconsistency, and *will all men to be saved*, and yet will some to be damned? No, Christians, No. This is contradiction in terms and beneath the harmony of his Divine nature to be concern'd in. Christ indeed *will all men to be saved*, but then he will have them be saved like, what they are, free-agents able and bound to co-operate with his grace to their own salvation. Accordingly *he gave himself a redemption for all*: And therefore to as many, as, co-operating with his grace, endeavour to lay hold on his redemption, *he is set unto resurrection.* While on the reverse, he is unhappily *set to the ruin of as many as*, obstinately abusing his graces, are resolved to forfeit that redemption. Hence it appears, that it is not from any absolute design of God to damn any one, that Christ is *set unto the ruin of many*; but proceeds from the obstinate malice of their own perverse wills, in refusing the redemption offer'd them, and contradicting the gracious dispensations of their Redeemer. O horrid perversity! Horrid indeed! That man the only person interested in this gracious purpose

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purpose

pose of Jesus, should be the one to thwart and contradict it; should set him up for an object of contradiction, who gave himself a victim of redemption!

Ah! let us cease then to wonder, let us no longer be surpris'd that this Divine Infant should be set unto the ruin of many, when so many industriously set him up for an Object of Contradiction. If there be any regard due to Christ, if any treatment be not too good for him; what can the majority of Christians expect from him but Ruin and vengeance? For what has he received from them in return for his mercies; what does he to this day meet with from the major part of Christians, but malignity and contradiction? If all his gracious measures were vigorously opposed, while on earth, by Jewish perversity; is he, now in Heaven, less furiously contradicted by the lives of ungrateful Christians? If they sought to throw stones at him, who would not believe in his Doctrins; do not we, who pretend to profess those Doctrins, more than stone him with the daily crimes we level at him? If they forced him to abscond from the temple of Jerusalem; what less do we than banish him, not only from our temples, but even from our habitations and hearts?

O dear loved Country! Faithless favourite Country! What has't thou been, and what art thou become? Once a second Jerusalem for holiness, a sanctuary of faith and piety, the glory of Catholic Religion, the Pride of Sanctity, and Queen of an Island of Saints; now, alas! what art thou but an improver upon the abominations of Babylon; an asylum for Ignorance, Heresy, Infidelity, Atheism, and Profligacy; the infamous prostitute of irreligion; the very sink and shame of impiety; the inglorious mistress of an island of reprobates, and the last worst model of an antichristian metropolis? O how is the gold tarnish'd! How is the best colour changed! How are the stones of the Sanctuary dispersed in the heads of all the streets! The noble children of this once holy Sion, and they who were clothed with the choicest gold of Divine Grace, how are they reputed, and justly reputed, as earthen fickle vessels, the work of the potter's hands, broken into dissoluteness at the touch of every tool of Satan? They, who fed voluptuously on the banquet of thy love, have perish'd in the ways of sin. They, who were brought up in scarlet, in the royal nuptial-garment of Christian Virtue, have embraced the dung and ordure of every filthy vice and uncleanness. And the iniquity of the daughter of this thy People, O Saviour of the World, is become greater than the sin of Sodom, which was overthrown in a moment.*

But O God of mercy! forbid in thy tenderness, that their punishments should ever be as much alike as their offences are. Rather prevent them with

* Jeremiah. Lament. iv.

thy grace and make them like the children of Nineveh in their repentance. Let the words of *Jonah* sound perpetually in their ears: *As yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be subverted.* * But! what were the crimes of Nineveh to ours? They, alas, poor, senseless creatures scarce could discern between their right hand and their left,† as God himself declared in their behalf. Not all their crimes then could assume the malice of one mortal sin of ours, made execrably black and heinous by the lights and salutary means afforded us. They knew nor Christ nor God, and therefore sinn'd against them: We knowing God and owning Christ, live in defiance and open contradiction of them. Shall we then hope for greater mercy, who deserve it less; nay, who deserve, instead of a gracious respite, a sudden vengeance? For ah! after all the merciful warnings, which a merciful God could be required to send us, of his coming wrath, not for forty days only, but, for more than four times forty years, what dispositions do we yet shew, we who have copied the crimes of Nineveh, to copy it's repentance? O how my heart trembles for thy safety, dear sinful people, when I think on this! How do I apprehend, when I view the ripeness of thy iniquity, the suddenness of thy fall! How do I fear each single day, lest the morrow give birth to thy ruin, whose heart is so obstinately bent on contradicting that Lord who gave himself a Redemption for thee! For O! to what City more properly than to thee, may we apply, what Christ by his Prophet says to his eternal Father? *Tumble them down, O Lord, and divide their tongues: For I have seen nothing but injustice and contradiction in the city; day and night do'th iniquity surround it upon the walls: Oppression in the midst of it and injustice: And there is never wanting in the streets of it usury and fraud. Wherefore let death on a sudden come upon them; and let them go alive down to hell: Because iniquity dwells in their habitations, and in the midst of them? †*

Go on then, riotous land, go on with your contradictions of Christ and his doct'rins: Revel in the ruins of faith and piety: Regardless of religion, give a loose to every shameful appetite. Trust your safety to the slowness of God's anger: And see what will be the consequence of your perversity. Alas too soon, too soon may his justice overtake you; too soon, and yet too late, may you sadly find, that He, who is slow to anger, is the more terrible in wrath. Ah! for pity's sake then look into yourselves while there is yet time; cloath you in sackcloth and ashes; cry to our Lord in strength, and let every man convert from his evil way; Who knoweth but God will convert and forgive; and will return from the fury of his wrath, and we shall not perish. ‡ You who have forsaken Christ,

* Chap. iii. † Chap. iv. ‡ Psalm. liv. || *Jonah* iv. banish'd

banish'd him from your hearts, and set him up for an object of contradiction, by the lives you have led, and the tenets you have held in opposition to his precepts and doctrines, call him, invite him again to return back to you; for who knows but his wrath may come upon you suddenly, and destroy you for ever as it has done other cities less rebellious than yours. For believe me there is nothing better to be expected from a life led in opposition to Christ and his gospel than inevitable ruin. And this ruin, as I shall now undertake to demonstrate, is big with double destruction:

- I. Destruction to our temporal felicity, and
- II. Destruction to our eternal happiness.

"O loving, lovely Saviour JESUS, remit the sins of this thy people, which hitherto have link'd them to perdition and kept them wide of thee. O born to save us! be our Saviour still: And since the gracious purpose of thy incarnation was, to give thyself a redemption for all; let not our past perversity set thee unto our ruin, who mercifully did'st set thyself to our resurrection. Convert us, dear Lord, and we shall be converted; call us to the grace of repentance, and we shall be truly penitent: And O give our repentance such incessant tears, as may efface our past contradiction, our former inconsistencies of Life; restore us to thy grace, and fit us for thy mercy; that thou may'st be justify'd in thy words, and with honour to thy justice and mercy, rescue us from the ruin temporal and eternal which hover over our heads."

If vice and folly were so scarce among us, that we could find none to vent our wrath against; I would not gainsay the public-spirit which is exerted in the midst of us to the oppression of wisdom and virtue. But, thanks to the fertility of this libertine age, there is no such dearth of iniquity or inhumanity in this very town, that we need persecute innocence and mercy by levelling indignities at the gospel of Christ. No, if public rigour should demand a trophy to be erected for every one, who deserves from the public the triumph of a *Haman*; Trees would be wanting to the merit of criminals, in this island, where capital delinquents may almost be reckon'd by the number of heads: And the foreign nations, whose vices, as well as states, we have imported and improved, must furnish our misdeeds with the merited rewards, if not with the hands to distribute them. So universally has the gangrene of immorality and irreligion spread, so corrupt are the manners, and so broken is the temperament of the public in this city; that the only fit executioner of general justice seems a general conflagration from Heaven, which,

laying in one heap of ashes both houses and inhabitants, may leave no surviving witness of the ruin. And what injustice should we have room to complain of, if Heaven, to remove from the dead all complaints of partiality, should make their fate ours, whose vices we have made our own? Would it not seem a degree of partiality in Heaven, and might not the subverted *Jerusalem* presume to complain of hard treatment in having been committed to sword and flame for crimes, which transmigrated to us, were suffer'd to reign with impunity? Now what crime could be laid to the charge of that unhappy metropolis, to which this can plead, *not guilty*. Have we no *Pilates* on our benches of justice, holding the wand of judgment, only to deal out oppression and injuries? Have we never seen *Caiphas* and *Annas*, who, not content with intruding into the sanctuary of the priesthood by the trap-door of violence, like *Robbers and Thieves*, as our Saviour terms them, destroy the flock of Christ with *Herefy* and immorality? Can we produce no *Judas*, who, unable to betray Christ, now is above their reach, practice their treacheries against his people under the mantle of apostleship? What are the majority of your modern teachers, but so many Scribes and Pharisees; Hypocrites, stumbling at straws, and leaping over blocks; Men imposing burdens on the people, which they scorn to touch with a finger; Blind guides leading the unwary sheep, who listen to them, into a ditch, with crying out, *here is Christ*, when Christ is not with them; Men of disguise, whose sable outsidings are the best emblems of the blackness of their actions, and the darkness of doctrines and falsehoods they broach, to impose upon a flock, which they have more talent to fleece than to feed? What are our populace but a worse-than-jewish rabble, who, if they cannot stone Christ in person, nor insult him on his cross, are for ever insulting him in his precepts; and who, shew no other knowledge of him than the prophaning his sacred name and mysteries in oaths, imprecations, perjuries, blasphemies, and obscenity? Have we not plenty of merchants, tradesmen and persons of all professions, without common faith; of magistrates without justice or mercy; of men without honesty; of women without shame, and youth without virtue or common decency? Go then, guiltless city, where flattery and debauchery make every avenue to honours an unfordable jakes for all who are not harden'd in iniquity: where Simony and Irreligion make the gown an insufferable reproach, to all who have a conscience left; where exorbitant wealth, extracted from the blood of the poor, is become the privileged property of the great; where injustice is the staff of power, Prostitution of conscience the clue to preferment; Where fraud is the current cash of merchandise, imposition and oblo-

quy the wit of conversation; where debauchery is the accomplishment of young men, and petulancy (to call it by no harsher a name) is deem'd sprightliness in that sex, whose chief ornament us'd to be modesty. But, I forget, I am departing from the stile of modern pulpits, so suited to the delicate ears of modern Christians: If I call things by their names, I shall be call'd abusive. Well then, accomplish'd city! Go flatter yourselves that you are safe from the fate of a depopulated *Jerusalem*, of an overthrown *Babylon*, of a heaven-burnt *Sodom*, whose guilt was innocence compared with yours.

But ah, thoughtless Christians! Remember, that tho' the Almighty be slow to wreak vengeance on the public corruptions of a city, if he does sometimes spin out their trial, if he does permit the swelling punishment to move on with tardy steps, it is not that his eyes are shut to the observation of their guilt. God is not, like the stupid deity, which the senseless *Athenians* framed to themselves without ears to hear the clamours of their dissolute manners crying to him for vengeance. No, no: *He will not slumber nor sleep; who keepeth Israel*, says David. * There are no soporiferous atoms flying round the throne of God, to close his eyes to our enormities. His justice is all-beholding, ever-seeing, and incessantly viewing our actions, says the Prophet, † *Our Lord looks down from Heaven and beholds all the sons of men . . . 'Tis he who form'd all their hearts; and who penetrates into all their actions.* And if he does delay chastisement, let not his slowness be your security. The more leisure the hovering meteors take to gather into a storm, the heavier is the shower when they burst. Look but on the bow in the hands of the archer, says St. *Augustin*, and take warning from it. "The more the bow-string is drawn back, the more fiercely does it dismiss the arrow, when it is let loose." God is a God of *Patience* and longanimity: *He wills not the death of sinners, but rather that they be converted and live:* Therefore has he mercy on thousands of those, who, repenting of their evil ways, love him and keep his commandments: Therefore does he suffer many sinners to live as long as there remains any prospect of their conversion: Therefore, in a word, does he take a long time to send his vengeance from Heaven. But ah how terrible is his wrath, when he does launch it forth! How does peace, plenty, honour, liberty, and every temporal felicity flee before it! The basis of all political felicity in this life is three-fold, and consists in due religion to God, justice between man and man, and a moral good life in every man's private capacity. All these did the *Canaanites* suffer to moulder away: They gave themselves up to idolatry against God, to injustice, oppression and debauchery of one-another, and each

* *Psalms cxx.*

† *Psalms xxxii.*

to the total corruption of their own hearts, as holy writ informs us. What wonder then, that, this triple basis undermin'd, the whole important fabrick of their public safety and felicity should be overthrown? Nay what wonder would it not have been, if it had stood unshaken? And yet it did stand, and stood for full four hundred years, uninterrupted amidst a multitude of iniquities. For four ages successively the *Canaanites* persisted in sin; set up Heaven for a sign to be contradicted, grew more and more insolent in evil, set conscience at defiance, acted the sovereigns of nature, and made it almost a matter of doubt, if providence presided over the world: But then? Were not their crimes overtaken at last? Was not their insolence humbled: their pride thrown into miserable fetters, and all their happiness destroy'd on a sudden? Ah yes! "Tho' some delay, some procrastination did intervene; the vengeance was not suspended to the last: The stroke was slow, but the destruction certain."

And what shall secure you, O dear-loved countrymen, from sharing one fate in common with the profligate *Canaanites*; You who share their iniquities in common with them? Hear one eternal truth, by the mouth of *Eutimius* and tremble. "They, says he, who share in the same guilt, shall share in the like punishments, and undergo one common vengeance." One irrefragable truth, which all who own a God must own, is, that there is no partiality to be used at the bar of Divine Justice. Conclude then, O Christians, without hesitation, that all cities, all nations, which copy the crimes of One-another, shall be made the same Example of Divine Wrath. God will not, cannot give room for complaints against him of partiality. Was he an exceptor of persons; we might share in the guilt of the proscribed, and hope to escape their chastisement. But as it is impossible for the Divine Majesty to be such; depend upon it, the sharers in one common guilt shall together "undergo one common vengeance." Tell me then, Christians: Are there among you, who, made insolent by power, riches and splendor, dare after the example of a *Herod*, to commit publicly incests, adulteries, and other obscenities; to riot in pomps, injustices, arrogance of speech and enormity of actions; to ridicule Christ and contemn the Divine Laws? Ah! what infatuation possesses you, that ye are not afraid of sharing, along with the sins of *Herod*, the worms which devour'd him alive, the pangs which tormented him, the rage and despair which consumed him: When, they who "share in the same-guilt shall share in the same punishments, and undergo one common vengeance? Are not many of you loquacious, like *Core*; sowers of dissention like *Dathan*: Revengeful, envious, calumniators, detractors, liars, disturbers

bers of public peace, yet more than *Abiram*? Are you not, like him, most of you, impugnors of the known truth; zealous in nothing but defamations of Christ, of his gospel and Church; and lukewarm in every thing which regards religion, but the setting up Christ and his orthodox truths for a sign to be contradicted? Ah? What then secures you from the vengeance threatening your perversity? Who can promise you that the earth shall not open under you, that hell shall not swallow you, alive as you are, bloody as you are with the butcher'd reputations; the massacred persons, and assassinated souls of the many, who have fallen victims to your, persecuting rage? What then! Shall the towers of *Jerusalem* have been hurl'd into ruin by the darts of Divine wrath? Shall luxury and libertinage have call'd in the *Saracens* to the oppression and perversion of the *African* Christians: Shall schism and heresy have open'd the way for Barbarians and Infidels to overthrow the whole church of *Greece*: And our own country, blacken'd with the same vices, nay including the vices of all those nations in one, escape the like scourge? Surely the same God of justice reigns over us, who reign'd over them. Surely, Christians, you are not so far intoxicated by iniquity as to imagin, that God has made a peace with guilt; or that he is weary of chastising the wicked. You could scarce think more indignantly of him, had he repealed that irrevocable decree of an equitable God, that "They who share in the same guilt shall share in the like punishments, and undergo one common vengeance."

It is not without mystery, beloved, that Holy Writ so frequently gives to private and public guilt a tongue of Bronzo, a voice of thunder, which, crying from the earth, echoes to the very throne of God. Thus does God describe it to the blood-sullied *Cain*. *The voice of thy brother's blood cries aloud to me from the earth.** And speaking of the iniquities of that uncleanly nation, *The cry of Sodom and Gomorrah, says the Lord, is multiplied, and their sin is aggravated exceedingly.*† Wherefore, says one of the exterminating angels, *Their cry is waxen loud before the Lord, who hath sent us to destroy them.*‡ It is sin, especially public, barefaced sin, which, snatching from the destroying angel the trumpet, sounds, with dreadful shrillness, from the turrets of a sinful City, the words of the Psalmist, *God hath forsaken it; pursue and take it. For there is no one to deliver it.* "Rise up then, Barbarians, rise up, Infidels, against these cities of Christendom, methinks, I hear the sins of Christians cry out. Rise and pour your legions, among them: commit them to fire and flame, destroy their habitations, lay their temples waste, their sumptuous edifices to ruin. They have

* *Gen. iv.* † *Ibid. xviii.* ‡ *Chap. xix.*

"trampled the Faith of Christ under foot, they have set him up for a sign which shall be contradicted: And now, He is set unto their ruin, who set himself to their resurrection. Revenge then, O Infidels, the cause of Christ, contradicted, ridiculed, insulted by Christians. Now, now is your time; the Lord has forsaken them, pursue and take them, there is no one to deliver them. Involve them, bury them for ever in the ruin they have sought; and let not one stone remain upon another to record their destruction, but what is indelibly stamp'd with this inscription, O Christians! faithless Christians! The voice of the blood of your brother, father, friend, and God and Saviour Jesus, cry'd to me from the earth for this long-retarded blow of justice."

But O great GOD of never-wearied mercy! forbear to listen to our crying crimes. Or rather stop the clamours of our crimes, by putting, with efficaciously converting grace, a happy period to our guilt. For ah what ruin else, must be preparing for us!

O *Greece*! O *Greece*! fair, faithless *Greece*! thou primitive cradle of Christianity! Thou first-born daughter of the Apostleship! Thou nursery of Christian Martyrs! Sacred horizon so early warm'd with the infant rays of new-born Gospel-truth! Where are thy glories now? Shew me yet standing one single unconsumed remain of thy proud structures; one solemn pile of building unerazed; one holy edifice yet unpolluted. Alas! an all-consuming fire lay'd waste thy houses; the blood of thy inhabitants asswaged the flames; and all-confounding time has left no single monument of any of thy former glories. Thy cities are converted into deserts, thy gardens into heath, and thy flow'ry meads into solitary wildernesses. The melody of thy music is changed for the hissing of serpents and the howlings of beasts of prey: Where thy nobles used to walk are now assembled insects and monsters. Ah! with tears let me ask, what, what has supplanted all thy former greatness and felicity? But!—Why do I ask what must extort so shameful an answer: "Our sins, alas, our schisms, heresies and sins were the subversion of our happiness, were the seeds of our ruin." How can I then forbear, O dear loved country, to address myself again to thee. So then, deluded nation, you, sole engrossers of every other nation's crimes, are to be privileged with liberty of sinning on, under the guarantee of Heaven never to feel the scourge of God's exasperated patience? Shall the Almighty then have punish'd every other sinful people, who have gone before you, and shall the sword of his impartial justice for you alone have lost it's edge? Tho' you, like them, lay all conscience aside, put out every spark of the light of Faith, and stifle every sense

sense of charity; though you, like the rest, trample the divine mysteries under foot, spurn at the holy sacraments and reduce Christianity to nothing but a name; if not to a proverb of contempt; though, where Christ with his Gospel and Inspirations cries out—*forgive, forgive, you, deaf to his voice and regardless of his precepts, cry out—“Revenge! blood and revenge;”* Tho’ your Saviour exhorts you for the love of God, to give of your own, and you blind to his example and insensible to his counsels, enrich yourselves with the plunder of others; tho’ Jesus, in a word, requires your very thoughts to be fragrant with purity, and you in *contradiction* to him render your very bodies so many sinks of corruption; still, still shall the scourge of injured angry Majesty, which has so severely visited every other sinful land, pass by and keep for ever wide of this? How? Ah! tell me, how shall Jesus not be *set unto the ruin of as many of us, as dare thus to set him for a sign to be contradicted?* How shall that God of impartial equity answer it to himself; when his Justice so loudly demands that All, “who *impenitently* share in the same crimes, should share in the like punishments and undergo one common vengeance?” But be assured, O sinful Christians, the cries of Justice will be heard, and so will the clamours of your sins, if your repentance cry not more loudly than they. “Yes, yes,” *says St. Ambrose,* “The crimes of Every One seemingly cry aloud.” And if this was not so, why would the Holy Ghost tell us by *Ecclesiasticus*, that, *Kingdoms are transfer’d from nation to nation, because of injustices, and injuries and contumelies and various frauds?*

“But! what is our guilt? Alas! What have we done, that the angry heavens should fall upon us?” *What, Self-blinded mortals? What had the world done in the days of Noah, to draw a deluge on themselves? Our Saviour in St. Matthew accuses them of nothing more than that their whole time was taken up in eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.* “And is this then so heinous a crime?” No, no: These acts are in themselves more innocence. It is the excess, the motive, the dissipation too often attending them, which makes the sin. Ah! how many sins do not they too frequently accumulate, who, thoughtless of God and of their souls, bury their thoughts and senses in wine, and luxury, and intemperance, and wanton pleasures of the flesh?” *What have ye done?”* What had the rich epicure of the Gospel done, that dying he should be buried in Hell? All which Christ lays to his charge in St. Luke † is, that, *He was clothed in purple and silk and feasted every day magnificently.* Will you yet understand, O Christians? Actions quite natu-

* Chap. xxiv.

† Chap. xvi.

ral, quite inoffensive in themselves, may, by excess, by extravagant abuse, become quite criminal. “To feast sometimes, *says a reverend Author,* “may be pardonable, but always, every-day! it is too much.” All sins are hateful evils, all are pests; but barefaced sins, sins boldly committed in the face of day, sins propagated and obstinately reiterated: O such sins indeed are exterminative in their nature, such exasperate the Divine Forbearance, banish Christ, and sound the trumpet of public calamity, before the face of great *Jehovah’s* wrath. That you sin sometimes, ’tis wicked; and merits damnation, if the sins be mortal: Still does the Divine Mercy often plead your excuse. But “Every-day! It is too much.” That once and away, a resentment rise in your breasts; that you now and then break out inadvertently into reproaches, or harbour some momentary thought of Revenge, is still a shame for Christians. But “Every-day! It is too much.” After years past to retain inveterate hatreds, after so often hearing the Word of God, after so many calls to forgiveness, so many checks of Conscience, to breathe nothing but—vengeance, calumny, infamy, death or lingering destruction to a person, who, perhaps inadvertently, had the misfortune to offend you? O this is too much for a Pagan; and (to use the words of a Pagan *) “What worse life could you live, “if you made but one in a kingdom of lions and tygers, and bears. Surely then it is inexpressibly too much for disciples of a crucified Jesus? That once you should have suffer’d your bodies created for temples of the Holy Ghost, to be fulfilled with the impurity of forbidden pleasures of the flesh, you ought forever to blush within yourselves. But that you should habitually persist in such pollutions; that you should publicly glory in them; nay, carry your obscenities to the place of Divine Worship; and with your ogles, your indecencies, and intrigues prostitute the very Sanctuary to a common stew: O surely “it is too much.” Not only to withhold from the Poor a part of the riches intrusted with you, as stewards for them; but even to wring from the veins of the Poor, and the Labourer their best juices, to swell your exorbitant wealth, “is certainly too much.” For men advanced in years, for parents, superiors, nay ecclesiastics, instead of exhibiting themselves patterns of every Christian Virtue, to make themselves examples, heads and leaders of youth, in every shameful pursuit which moral heathens have formerly detested: It cannot surely be denied, that “It is greatly, inexpressibly too much.” Nor can the barefaced frequency (the impudent familiarity, *Preachers of old might have ventured to say*) with which these enormities stare Virtue and Grace out

* *Semica.*

of

of countenance, in this nation and city, render them less extravagant, less horrible to men of any conscience than they really are in the sight of God. So very extravagant are they, that God, seeing a whole people thus *set upon contradicting him*, what else can he be expected to do for the reparation of his honour, than as he did by *Jerusalem*, to depart from it, and give it up to the ruin it deserves?

Need I repeat to you, dear Christians, that irrevocable Decree of Eternal Truth, recorded by *Solomon* in his book of Wisdom * that, *by what things a man sinneth, by the same also is he tormented*? Thus was *Haman*, the ambitious, implacable *Haman*, suspended on that very gibbet, he raised for *Mordecai*. Thus too Great God of Justice, as, thy unalterable Truth records, † didst thou give up the sinful sons of *Israel* to their own iniquities, to be tormented by them. Thus for their senseless thoughts of iniquity, for that *Some erring did worship dumb serpents and superfluous beasts, thou did send upon them a multitude of dumb beasts for vengeance, that they might know, that* BY WHAT THINGS A MAN SINNETH, BY THE SAME ALSO HE IS TORMENTED.

And what else, think you, is imported in those mysterious words of *Isaiab*, ‡ *Our iniquities are multiplied before thee* (O Lord) and OUR SINS HAVE ANSWER'D TO US, but, that barefaced iniquities (like those which riot with impunity in this unhappy land) after bounding sonorously at the throne of GOD, revert with clamorous destruction back to the criminals? Something wonderful in Nature, Beloved, is the operation of an echo. Tempt it not with your voice, and nothing more silent. Provoke it loudly as you can, and nothing more clamorous. Yet is it not any existence different from the sound first emitted, but a re-percussion of the first insult offer'd to the silent recipient. Ah! Such, such is the operation of loquacious iniquity. No sooner, than when it insults with guilty clamours the throne of the Almighty, does it revert to the criminals. But then, then indeed, (especially if our Sins are multiplied before him) ah! too certainly *do our sins answer to us*. Thus was it too that the Almighty made the world and all things in it to echo to the conduct of man: GOD created all things in perfect subjection to man: Yes Lord! *Thou didst appoint him sovereign over all the works of thy hands* || But *Adam* revolted against God, and behold! Every savage beast, echoing to his revolt, rises up in rebellion against *Adam*. *Moses* subjects himself to the Will of his Divine Maker: And Lo! all creatures animate and inanimate, men, beasts and rocks, in echo to his obedience, move at the beckon of his rod. It is not

* Chap. xi. † *Ibid*. ‡ *Isaiab* lix. || *Psal* viii.

without reason that the very heathens have said, that "Virtue is it's own reward." For the recompence which follows the actions of the Virtuous is but a kind of reverting echo to their good deeds: So too the punishment, which generally reverts to the wicked, is the very voice of their iniquities answering them in their own language. What room had the impious *Abab* and *Jezabel* to murmur at any severity of answer, which their impieties made them? Could they, with any Justice, complain of being cut off by the Divine Vengeance, together with their whole race? No, no: could they now speak; they must own, their punishment was the justest echo to their crimes; they must confess and say, *our sins have answer'd us*. She perpetrated, and he was consenting to, the massacre of the innocent *Naboth* in *Jezreel*. Wherefore, Thus say'th our Lord: * *In this place where dogs have lick'd the blood of Naboth, they shall lick thy blood also*. And of *Jezabel* also our Lord spake saying, *the dogs shall eat Jezabel in the field of Jezreel*. And was it not done as the Lord say'd? Yes: *Abab* was slain in battle and the dogs lick'd his blood † And *Jezabel* was soon after thrown out of the window of her palace; the wall was besprinkled with her blood in the fall; she was trodden to death by the horses of *Jehu*; and the echo of divine vengeance so closely pursued the very remains of that wicked woman, that before they could bury her, the dogs devour'd her body; and nothing was found, of her, but the skull and the feet, and the extreme parts of her hands. || Truly then might *Abab* and *Jezabel* say: *Our iniquities are multiplied before thee* (O Lord!) and *our sins have answer'd to us*. What injustice or oppression had the Jews to complain of in the ignoble Wretchedness of their fate; when the *Romans*, after subduing them, sold their persons at thirty for a penny? Did not they themselves, sometime before, both buy and sell the Son of God for thirty pence? Full gently then did their contemptible treatment of Christ answer them, in rating each of them but at thirty times less price than him, who was infinitely more valuable than all mankind. Still is it true, you see, Christians, that our sins, when exorbitantly multiplied, *do and will answer us*. Ah! how, for these many ages past, has not destruction rioted about the christian provinces of *Europe*, in various shapes of war, and plagues, and civil broils, and meagre famine; floods, earthquakes, pillagings and conflagrations? How has it past from nation to nation, and from one town to another? And in every country, where it has set a foot, how has it not laid whole cities waste with all their miserable inhabitants? O! cannot Christians yet be brought to comprehend what very Pagans understood so well,

* 3 Kings xxi. † *Ibid* ch xx. || 4 Kings ix.

that

that our sins answer us? Ah, if lean scarcity, which, now for some years past, has hover'd over Europe with threatening frowns, still every year agreeably disappointing us, should pitch at length upon this kindly soil; should we not have but too much room to say, *Our sins have answer'd to us?* Might we not, with much more truth than the poor heathenish *Symmacus*, cry out, "Alas! It is not with blights our harvest is destroy'd: It is not by hail our annual fruits are blasted. No, it is by sacrilege, the seasons are made barren." Lusts more than plagues convert whole cities into hospitals. Domestic feuds, resentments, butcheries and defamations, perjuries, forgeries and civil discord depopulate more lands than foreign swords can do. And it is by avarice, usury, drunkenness, injustice, scandal and oppression, much more than by the force of storms and blights, that the poor sower's labours prove in vain, and all the reaper's hopes are blasted. "Alas! It is not by blights our harvest is destroy'd: It is not by hail our annual fruits are blasted: No, It is by sacrilege, that the seasons are made barren, when they are so." If we deny to God the fruit of virtuous actions; just is it, that the earth should deny us its usual tribute. If we harden our hearts into steel against the expectations of Heaven from us, just is it that the heavens should harden into adamant against our expectations from thence. If we ruin the gracious prospect, which Christ gave us, of eternal resurrection and temporal felicity, by setting him up for a sign to be contradicted; it is but just, that he should permit our Contradictions, in eccho to our Perversity, to set him up, to the ruin of as many of us as persist in our obstinacy. It is our irregular conduct, which teaches the Seasons and Elements to revolt from Order: And the calamitous disasters and catastrophes, which wage war against us, are but the eccho to that rebellion which we perversely carry on against the Lord of Hosts, our God and Saviour. Ah Christians! Be not deceived: Raise not effects into causes. Too, too often is it true, in time of scarcity, that "It is by Sacrilege, the Seasons are made barren." Too justly, for the most part, may the wretched sufferers by it, say, *our iniquities are multiplied before thee (O Lord!) and our sins have answered us.*

II. I will not deny, dear Christians, that this first kind of destruction, the destruction of all temporal felicity, is inexpressibly grievous; and full heavy enough to make every mortal, in possession of reason, tremble at the bare thought of living in opposition to Christ. But O my God and Saviour! What is all this to that destruction which leads us wide of everlasting happiness! What but a bugbear, the tale of nurses to affright young children,

is the with-drawing thy earthly providence; if compared with that fierce indignation which induces thee to withdraw thy faith and grace from a whole sinful land? O! would but time permit me; how could I not expatiate on the too tragic loss, in many Christian nations, of Christ's unspotted faith, at first supplanted by that many-headed monster heresy, and afterwards, by infidelity, intirely exiled and forced to seek a refuge in other nations? O *Rhodes!* unhappy *Rhodes!* thou island once so glorious! there was a time, when thou wast honoured as the bulwark of Christianity, and the strong hold of the Church's holy Champions. But! thy glories now, alas, are buried, all, in the night of infidelity. O *Constantinople!* thou once acknowledged Queen of Empire, a second *Rome*, not by a tyrant *Cesar* govern'd, but by a crucified Redeemer! What art thou, but the footstool of barbarity, the sink of mahometan absurdity, and lawless seat of vice and infidelity?

O heavens! So then a people may become thus wicked? So then a sinful land may provoke the Almighty to withdraw his grace and lights and saving helps? So then the public vices and reiterated profligacies of a nation may induce God to convert into impenetrable adamant the tender bowels of his infinit mercy, so far as to withdraw his grace and faith out of the reach of their insults, and give them up to themselves, to heresy, to infidelity and perdition? So then, in a word, God's unwearied bounty can be so grievously abused and exasperated, by public perversity, as, at length, to be provoked to give up his very sanctuary to be converted into a den of thieves, a stable of unclean creatures? O! what a broacher of romances would not a preacher have been thought in *Constantinople*, who, but a few years before it was sacked by the *Turks*, had said before a numerous audience, from the pulpit, *These naughty men be will bring to naught; and his wine-yard be will let out to other husbandmen.** They would have stoned him, probably, for a dreaming impostor; had he farther told them: "You are these naughty men; whose iniquities are swollen to their height, and the measure of whose sins overflows: Inasmuch that, unless you stem the rapid torrent by a speedy super-abundant repentance, an inundation of fire shall overwhelm you: Your sacred temples will be turn'd into uncleanly mosques: In your religious choirs, instead of religious psalmody sung to the honour of Christ, blasphemies will be mutter'd to the impious *Mahomet*: The holy Gospels will be burnt instead of incense; and your wretched posterity in lieu of the sacred baptismal character, to make them children of God, will receive the pollutions of Mussulmen and become children of

* *St. Math* xxi.

"Satan." What think you, Christians? Would not the sacred orator, who had utter'd to them such a threatening prediction, have raised laughter rather than compunction in them? Instead of a prophet, he would probably have passed for a madman, and excited many more to indignation than to repentance. And yet the sentence was pronounced in Heaven: Divine vengeance did strike the blow; and now, what is become of all the pious glory of *Constantinople*? Where are her christian senators, her religious populace, her communities of angels incarnate: Where her cloisters of holy virgins espoused to JESUS? Are not her temples without sacraments, her priests without piety, her youth without the grace of Christ, her men and women without the knowledge and fear of GOD, and all her inhabitants without any reasonable hopes of Heaven?

O Holy ancestors of a proscribed people! You, who are now glorious and triumphant in Heaven, can see, how these your wretched descendants, from their birth to their death, wear the mark of the beast on their Foreheads; how they all pass from the Wombs of their Mothers into the Arms of Satan; how uncleanness fattens them to perdition, during life; and through what an impenetrable fog of errors, vice, sensuality and Infidel ignorance they struggle on to utter unending misery and darkness. O! could you have foreseen as much, while in the flesh; what bitter bitter anguish must have wreck'd your souls! And You, O sacred ancestors of ours! You see, how near WE are to their rash venturous state. O! solicit then, O! Importune the GOD of mercy, to check our growing rashness. As yet, it is to be hoped we are not quite upon the brink of that dread precipice. As yet, I trust, the measure of our crimes is not so swollen as to induce the Almighty to abandon us for ever. No: Still have we comfortable room to hope, that God has yet in store his *seven thousand souls, who have not bow'd their knees to Baal*. * Still has he a chosen number of faithful servants left, among us, who have not yielded up themselves to schism, heresy, or vice or infidelity; industrious husbandmen of Christ's pure faith and grace, whose pious works and fervent prayers preserve this land from utter desolation, suspend the sword of angry justice; and may, perhaps, (O gracious Jesus grant it!) one day, recall the too-long banish'd influence of pure religion to it's favorit seat. But for them, what must become of all the rest? O then, ye happy souls! stand steadfast in your faith and piety, for your dear country's sake. Beware, ye who stand, *lest you fall*. Beware, you swim not with the stream of evil commination; nor let the rapid tide of public sin and scandal bear you down: But, with unshaken constancy in good, and an unwearied fervor of de-

* 3 Kings xix.

votion, worthy of Christians, worthy of Catholics, resist the gather'd torrent of error, ignorance, and irreligion, whose swelling surges foam and dash around you, to overwhelm you; but in vain, while you adhere to Christ's unerring faith. Grant then, dear GOD of pity, patience and forbearance, that these may persevere and multiply: Accept their prayers as incense in thy sight, to extirpate vice and error from this soil once precious in thy eyes: For their loved sakes, *deliver not, to beasts, souls still confessing to thee: And the souls of thy poor forget not to the end*. * Let not the pest of general corruption, in a word, taint their purity or slacken the devotion of the faithful few. For, O! Beloved, if it should; how soon might not the downhill progress of impiety reduce their little number to that which was left in *Sodom*, on the eve of it's destruction; when, for want of so slender a number of guiltless souls to stay GOD's long-suspended vengeance, as TEN, that wretched country was given up to endless ruin, by infinit mercy exasperated into equitable wrath? But, ah dear Lord! In thee we trust, that thou wilt not bring this judgment on us.

However, best-beloved Brethren, shall Christians not tremble? Are our lives so innocent, that we need entertain no fear of this befalling us? Are our manners so angelical; are our hearts so clean from sin, are our habitations and Conversations so remote from scandals, that we may each indulge our consciences in profound security and say, *There shall no evil come to thee: And a scourge shall not come near to thy tabernacle*? † O happy, happy, thrice happy souls, whose blessed case this is! How do I rejoice with you, and glorify the Almighty Donor of all good gifts! And if this be the happy state of every-one of you; how much more shall I rejoice? But if, even among you, O orthodox Disciples of my Dear Redeemer, his mysteries are abused by some; if his Holy Sacraments are prophaned, or slighted; if many of you are litigious, quarrelsome, jealous, envious of one-another's spiritual or temporal good, like schismatics: If you can lye, detract, defame, oppress, defraud, and out-do the sons of heresy, in avarice, lechery, and ambition: If you surpass, any of you, the very infidels in lust, revenge, and gluttony and drunkenness, and other crying crimes; what room have you, for security; or I, for joy? If you strengthen the enemies of Christ's pure faith, and confirm with your actions their forgeries and defamations, to the discredit of his Church, by returning their fraud with fraud; their persecutions with revilings; and their enmity with hatred; what security is yours? If you copy, with their dress, their manners, expressions and sentiments, swear with them, riot with them, and sin

* Psalm lxxiii.

† Psalm xc.

with them; can your peace be real? If any among you cabal with them, against the dictates of your own consciences, against the peace and edification of your brethren, against the respect due to the just laws of your country, against the obedience due to the ruling powers, (in defiance of *St. Paul's* admonition * *to be subject to princes and magistrates*) and against the sovereign honour due to GOD; What comes of your security? If you neglect, like many of them, to love justice, to pursue mercy, and to walk humbly before GOD; to forgive and give, where you are able and occasion calls; and to practice every work of mercy in your power, spiritual or temporal, to all mankind without exception, friends, strangers, or even enemies, whatever be their wants, whatever be their state, profession, real merit, country or profession;—what inward peace can you enjoy, or I rejoice in with you? In a word, if the souls of some of us be almost addled into mere flesh, and our maxims rise not above those of a pagan; if the slime of sordid interest so fascinates us, that Heaven, immortality and endless bliss escape our thoughts; if in our passions we are nothing above a savage, and, in the gratification of our reptil appetites, we place ourselves upon a level with the speechless creation; what comes of all our inward peace and security? Is our security more than a senseless lethargy? Is our peace aught but stupid insensibility? Acting thus, are not our lives diametrically opposed to the life and doctrines of JESUS CHRIST? Are we not in every such practice, setting him up for a sign of contradiction who gave himself a victim of redemption? And what can we reasonably expect, but that such perverse ingratitude should recoil on our own heads, and set him up unto the ruin of as many of us, as persist in thus contradicting our eternal benefactor and friend? GOD indeed has not as yet stretcht forth his hand to the sword of wrath: True. But can he not still stretch it? Shall we then venture to exasperate him? Shall we go on sinning till he does strike? Shall we never, till then, prepare against the blow? Is it wise to stay till the wound is made, before we put on armour; and never apply an antidote till death

* *Tit. iii.*

has seized us? Look ye, Christians: GOD sees, and says nothing: He sees, and forgives: He sees, and forbears to scourge. What say you then? Will He therefore never speak? Will he forgive to the end? Will he spare the bad for ever? Foolish, false, deceitful reasoning! "What, says *St. Peter Damian*? "Because he has hitherto borne you with silent patience, will he therefore always do so? Ah! "have you not read, that he will come to judgment, "throwing aside all patience, unknowing any humiliation, and rejecting all mercy as much as if "he had been a total stranger to it?" Let me then caution you, O harden'd sinners: Build not upon hiding yourselves. Hide yourselves in the thickest of the croud, he will find you out. He, who made you, moves in the midst of you, and penetrates to the deepest recesses within you. And will he, who keeps already so many millions of the brightest souls, of the most eminent Geniuses, of the most sprightly creatures, chain'd down to never-ending flames, will he pardon you against your wills? To spare you, shall he not spare his own justice? No, no: To shew mercy to his beatitude, he will banish you for ever from his sight. He will, he must, condemn you to the everlasting misery you merit, unless you speedily repent and do penance. But if you wisely resolve on repentance and penance, and execute your purpose effectually: Then, O then indeed you may set ruin at defiance, and confidently hope that this gracious Babe JESUS, who is set unto the ruin of all impenitent sinners, is set unto the resurrection of as many of you as persevere in your fidelity to him; and will reward your constancy in good with a resurrection unto higher and higher graces in this life, till he finds you fit for a fulness of glory in the next. Whither I beseech Almighty Mercy to conduct you: In the name, &c.

N. B. When a Sunday falls between the Circumcision and Epiphany of our Lord, the whole Divine Service is of the Octave occurring: And no notice is taken (in either the Mass or the Office) of the Sunday; which is therefore call'd VACANT SUNDAY, as having no Gospel particularly appropriated to it.

S E R M O N O N V A C A N T S U N D A Y.

PSALM xviii. 2.

Day to day uttereth a word: And night to night pointeth-out knowledge.

A Sunday without a Gospel? Christians without instruction! Ah Sacred Mother Church! How can'st thou leave thy children, this day, unprovided with the heavenly nouriture of Christ's enlivening word? Why do'st thou leave us fainting, breathless, panting in vain with thirst after the fountains of wisdom of our Saviour? Without a continual supply of his divine instructive word and doctrines, what are we but like the *little-ones and sucking babes*, in *Jeremiah*, * who swooned in the streets of the town: Who say'd to their mothers, where is corn and wine? when they fainted as the wounded in the streets of the city; when they yielded up their ghosts in the bosom of their mothers? Surely the inexhaustible source of infinite wisdom is not dried up. Surely the eternal word has not lost the power of speech. Surely the gospel of Christ is not so drain'd, that it cannot afford us to day one single line of instruction. No, no: Were there as many Sundays in the year, as there are days; the gospel might afford to each it's separate instruction, and still have lights to spare. Why then, O Holy Mother, do'st thou with-hold thy hand at present, who, every day besides, do'st open it so liberally? Ah sacred spouse of Christ! Thou has't, in this thy purpose and a heavenly one. No sooner David whispers in my ear, *Day to day uttereth a word, and night to night pointeth out knowledge*, than all the gracious mystery brightens up before me, and shews me thy ineffably inspired design. Well may'st thou, for one day, with-hold from us that light divine of evangelic truths, which we from day to day, from year to year, so shamefully abuse. How cheerfully, how tenderly, how constantly do'st thou hold out thy parent-arm to guide us, through the impervious, gloomy, rugged maze of mortal life, to thy eternal spouse's mansions, by the lustre of this

* *Jeremiah's Lament.* Chap. ii.

light! And yet how eagerly, how obstinately, how ungratefully do we shut our eyes to it's radiant rays and turn our backs on thee, to follow the prince of darkness, through the most thorny labyrinths of a miserable world, to endless misery? Ah! What do my eyes behold? How anxious do I see the bulk of human nature! How do they study, speculate, turmoil and sweat, and almost agonize with eagerness! And all for what? Is it to purchase a blissful immortality? Is it to reach the realms of inextinguishable light? Ah no! Their wishes wander quite a different way. All the vast stock of cares, anxieties and toils, with which so many noble souls are quite consumed, quite spent: All is laid out in searching after the world and it's enjoyments: All is to gain some elbow-room; to rise, to swell, to strut, and riot in the world. O souls created for a nobler end! Is nothing worthy of your pursuits but the world? Does Eternity, does Heaven, does God deserve no part of your care? Is the being children of the prince of darkness so much more profitable, than being children of Jesus Christ, the Eternal God of day, himself the everlasting DAY and Light of all the blessed above? Ah no! This hour shall shew how little you can hope to gain by the exchange.

Methinks, I hear this DIVINE DAY, utter a word of inspiration, to Thee, O sacred Mother Church! Thou grace-communicating DAY and luminary of the Faithful! "Hold, spotless Spouse, methinks he says, with-hold a while thy salutary lights and mine, from these unthinking undeserving creatures. Since they will needs postpone me to the world; and since the gloom of that delights them more than all the rays of Light, my gospel can afford them; even see, for one day, what they are without it. Perhaps, the splendor of it's truths may be too strong for their poor fleshly minds. Perhaps, a dear-bought knowledge from the world may suit them better than the gratis-given science my Gospel would dispense. Leave then these sons of darkness to the gloomy world they are so fond of. Even

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"that itself shall teach them my eternal truths, if they but study it: Even that shall shew them, what they lose, in leaving me for that: *And night itself, the night of worldly pursuits shall point-out, to the night of their flesh-burden'd understandings the knowledge necessary to lead them back to me.*"

So then, dear Christians, this *Sunday*, we are left to grope out our way through the thick night of a bedarken'd world. So then Christ Jesus the Eternal Day, hath utter'd a word, and Holy Church, that never-failing Day, which borrows all it's light from him, has shut up the gospel and with-drawn every ray of evangelical instruction from us. Come then, fond worldlings: Let us plunge, in good earnest, into this world, we are so foolishly enamour'd with; and see what we can find in it so amiable, which merits, in our hearts, a preference to Heaven. Who knows, but struggling through the impenetrable mist, the dreary glimmerings of joy, which hitherto deceived our purblind understandings, may serve to shew us all the deformity of what we set our hearts upon? Who knows, but *night to night may point out knowledge*; And we may learn by bought experience to prefer honour, peace and ease, to shame, anxiety and labour; grace to guilt; eternal beatitude, to temporal and eternal misery; glory to shame, and heaven to the world? Strange unusual errand! To recur to a giddy world to purchase wisdom? But! Since we are sent this morning, let us go for once and learn at least,

- I. What encouragement this world, so idolized, gives to it's followers in the pursuit of it:
- II. What rewards in the enjoyment of it: and
- III. What useful reflections may be drawn from both.

"O Loving Saviour! do not quite forsake us. Ungratefully as we have acted hitherto, in slighting all thy lights and graces; do not withdraw them wholly from us now, when we want them most. But since thou judgest meet, this day, to eclipse thy gospel-rays; O be thyself our guide; and kindly lead us, through this labyrinth of labour, sin and ignorance and error, to the smooth, safe, unerring paths of solid faith and piety. Shew us this fondled world, this idol of illusion, in it's genuine horrors; that, seeing the dangers which our rash pursuit of it has till now exposed us to, we may renounce it once for all, and in good earnest cling to thee."

I. It is an idle as well as superstitious industry, Beloved Christians, to be at so much studied pains to consult the planets for the evils which may befall

us. What need is there to soar to the skies, to ransack the immense volume of luminous Orbs, in search of calamities, which shew themselves but too soon, and which we want as many eyes to bewail as we have members to feel them? Ah! Every house, every heart is so plentifully stock'd with it's own, that every tongue may cry out, with Holy Job, * *Pains are warring upon me.* And, alas, with what fury are we not besieged and assaulted on every side, in every instant, by miseries of every kind? The skies, the earth, the elements; strangers, acquaintance, domestic friends; all, as it were, in conspiracy against us, how variously, how successively, how severely do they not in their turns, surprise, assail and harass us? What corner is there in this exile, this vale of tears we are so attach'd to, which does not echo forth those melancholy accents: *Pains are warring upon me?* "Woe is to me, cries that rich man reduced, What cruel reverse of fortune is it, which thus devours my rents, wrecks all my traffic, blights all my harvest, and moulders away all my substance. How am I nonsuited in every just trial? How am I frown'd away from court? Or how is every door shut to my approaches? O misery, how do'st thou pursue me! Ah! how severely are *pains warring upon me?*" Another disappointed murmurer echoes to the former, "Alas what evil fate has robb'd me of this darling, this heir to my estate, this partner of my bed, this bosom friend, this stay to all my hopes? O hapless wretch! *What pains are warring upon me!* Again this other languishing in sickness, "Ah, he cries, how has disease disfigured this once comely frame of mine? How, has it blasted all the bloom of this admired countenance; admired by all, but idolized by me? How does this fever parch and wither me; how does this ague chill my very vitals; how does this gout, this rheumatism, this palsy nail me to a bed of tortures? Ah! Why do I suffer thus ulcer'd, rack'd, thus rotting by degrees? Why do I live this agonizing life, not wholly dead and scarcely half-alive, while thus in every part, *Pains are warring upon me.*" Go where you will, stay where you will, if you associate with men, what can you hear but cries like these: "What sorrows are like mine," cries One? "What evils, cries Another, can there be, which may compare with those I feel?" And you, who hear the lamentations of them all, how do you under-rate their joint calamities confronted with your own? If you forbear express reproaches, it is ten to one but inwardly you scorn them as pusillanimous. "Alas faint-hearted creatures, you say *within you*, if you complain for such mere trifles, what would you do in my condition? For ah!

* Chap. x.

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" what are such sufferings but enjoyments compared with the Pains which are warring upon me?" So inseparable is misery from every station in the world.

What then, Beloved Christians? Is this the reception which the world affords to All it's favorite followers? Yes: This makes some part of it. But what is this? Alas, it is very gentleness to what remains. As yet we have said nothing of so many other strange and frequent, severe and wringing miseries with which it's corrupted hands are full. As yet we have not mention'd the mischiefs machinated under the lascivious smiles of a *Dalila*. The revengeful darts, the calumnious stabs to reputation, the murderous designs and butcherly attempts, cover'd under the friendships of a *Joab*; nor the usuries, frauds, impositions, oppressions, sacrileges and bloodshed hatch'd by avarice, and brought to effect by the destructive kisses of a *Judas*. And there is no Age, no Year, perhaps no Day or Hour in the Day, which is not witness to some of these, in every nation, every city (and would to God! I could with full assurance say, not almost under every roof) in some shape or another. I must never come to a conclusion, did I undertake a detail of the oppressions, under which the Poor are made to groan; of the jealousies and envy with which the Powerful are powerfully tormented; of the Injustices with which Merit is brow-beaten, nay, often-times overwhelm'd. The days of the longest liver would not suffice to give a slender account of the Vices committed in Courts; the grievances done at the Bars of Justice; or the lingering deaths which owe all their mischiefs to the ignorance, avarice or rashness of the Faculty. Barely to number over the strong holds made for fraud, imposture, ignorance, vice, flattery, impudence and hypocrisy, to triumph-in over Honesty, Plain-dealing, Sense, Virtue, Sincerity, Modesty and Piety, would demand an Age of Time. And if a Patriarchal life would be too short to enumerate all the bitter evils which besiege mankind from the cradle to the grave; the only comfortable reflection is, that no man can live even long enough to feel one half of the miseries which threaten and beset himself.

And can there then be persons nevertheless so strangely infatuated to a world thus wretched, as to have a hankering after it? Can there be such, did I say? Alas there are. Our own hearts, these very hearts, are so zealously devoted to it; that, even this very hour, while it is painted to our understandings in all it's deformity, all our passions are revolting with rage and impatience: So little can we bear to see the dear-beloved Idol exposed. This was the mad disorder never understood by that sublime and penetrating Genius, who understood so much:

St. *Augustin* I mean. "What says the Saint, The world is full of disturbance, and yet is beloved by us! And yet we eagerly yearn after it! Ah! what should we do then, if it afforded Rest?" The world, Christians, is for ever laying snares for you; continually persecuting you; perpetually ill-using you: And yet are you attach'd to it? Alas then, what would you be; if, disarm'd of all it's cruelty, it should flatter you with prospects of peace and safety? See you not that the Traitor, having discover'd that no injuries, no ill-usage can alienate your affections from it, reaches even to the harassing you without reserve? Instead of gilding the bitter pills, instead of sweetening the murderous potions it gives you, often does it feed you with rank unmingled poison. Ah! rouse then for once the delicacy of your spirits, and suffer not such Insolence to triumph over your patience. Is it not a shame, that souls so nobly form'd, and for such noble purposes, as yours are, should meanly devote the flower of all their spirits to such a shameless, base, encroaching enemy? Hear then the Holy Ghost conjuring you, by the mouth of *SOLOMON*: Give not your honour to the stranger, nor your years to the cruel. * If you will not renounce the servitude of a Tyrant, which thus persecutes you to destruction, from a principle of courage; do it at least from a sense of resentment. Has the world robb'd you of that Patron who protected you against your adversaries; of that beauteous Object who fomented your concupiscence and animated your towering expectations; of that child, that only spur to all your ambitious views; or of that estate the only brat of all your wishes? Has it forced the prerogatives of your merit to give way to the more powerful interest of a worthless competitor; help'd the artifices of an adversary to weigh down the justice of your cause; or built the advancement of a correspondent upon the ruins of your fortune? O the traitor! But what less could you expect from a perfidious world: an implacable enemy ever intent on your destruction? Away then, away with the intolerable yoke: Shake off the traitorous correspondence: Resolve, and be free: Revolt but against Slavery, and Liberty shall court you. Methinks, I see (and ah! how do I long to see) you set about it: That I may say to you, as St. *Fulgensius* did to *Theodore*: "I rejoice with you, that now you trample with contempt upon that world, which, while you loved it, trampled upon you." But why do I waste my breath?

II. "O Father, methinks you cry! There need not so many invectives, to rouse our resentment. We are not of so pacific a composition, that we can easily love what hates us. Full sensible

* Prov. v.

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“we are, that the world has hitherto treated us but rudely. Yet who knows, but after such indignant usage to us, It may grow tired of it’s insults, and it’s own rage may blunt the edge of it’s abusive hatred. Was not *Daniel*, in the den of lions, beset with every terror: Yet with what glory did not he escape them all? What danger could exceed that of the children in the fiery furnace? Yet was the evil in their apprehensions, the only evil they felt: And the flames, which, while barely threaten’d, made the matter of their fears, were made in the assay of them the instrument of their glory. Was not the chaste Patriarch *Joseph* condemn’d to rot out life in ignoble fetters? Yet were those ignominious irons temper’d into a glorious crown of liberty and splendor, by his constancy in bearing them. If there are multitudes condemn’d to misery by the world; how many too do we not behold, who, by paying homage to it, attain to rejoicing, sparkling, and making a figure, along with it? Wherefore then may not we continue to serve it with assiduity, in hopes of the like recompence?” But O Beloved Christians of mine! How often are not those hopes abortive, for once that they prove successful? What a malicious pleasure does not the tyrant world take in baffling the expectations of it’s followers? And where it is most liberal in rewards, how perfidious is It not in mingling every pleasing draught, it gives, with mortal venom? Say, Dearest Fellow-strugglers; and, I conjure you, be sincere: Did you ever taste a pleasure in this world, which was not mingled with some gall, some deathful regret, like That poor *Jonathan* was wreck’d with, after a passing taste of the little honey which had liked to cost him so dear? O *hapless me*, did you not exclaim with him? *Hapless me! I did but taste a little honey and Lo! I must die.* Confess, O Lechers! Did you ever gather roses which were not over-purchased, considering the thorns you were tortured with! O what jealousies! What piques! What contempts! What tears! What desperations! What rivalings! What frenzies and what dangers have not been the fruits of your wanton industries?—Misers! have you ever laid up any sweets, which have not multiplied, tormenting peace-destroying worms in your breast? O what fears, what losses, what pains! What anxieties, and what agonies have you not cherish’d with the hoarded heap?—Grandeers? Did you ever hold the Rod of Power in your hands, which did not more than once change to a Serpent; not to work wonders at your will, like that of *Moses*, but to sting with the most bitter sense of the misery of your station, with the liveliest sense of the poison mingled in the luscious

draught your ambition thirsted after? O what fatiguing affairs, what diffidences! What conspiracies and treacheries robb’d you of rest and every taste of pleasure.

Ah the world might be borne with, if it was enemy only to those whom it frowns upon: But the worst is, that it is a more bitter enemy to all whom it flatters. The worst, I say is, that, to triumph compleatly in it’s treachery, it often exerts, to the torture of it’s adherents, those very objects, on which they built all their expectations of pleasure or profit. Is a man by his courage and conduct arrived to the dignity of a Generalissimo, like *Abner*? The world shall presently substitute a false friend like *Joab*, to cut him off and succeed in his honours. Is he the son of a Prince, a Prince himself, like *Mephiboseth*? A treacherous slave shall have it in his power to step into his Lord’s inheritance, by the assistance of perjury, as *Ziba* did. Is a man the first-born of his father, as *Esau* was? What then? a younger brother shall disappoint all his hopes, by first getting the start, as *Jacob* did in his parent’s graces; and then stepping into the estate. Even Kings themselves are not safe with all their Heaven-deputed power. Even in the height of their glory, some foreign conqueror, or some domestic traitor; perhaps, to make the misery more stinging, some favourite child shall rise in arms against him, to strip him of his regal honours. And could one find a man on earth endow’d with every power, every title to unenvied happiness? was he another Christ; there would not be wanting *Judas* in abundance, who, to promote some trifling prospect of self-interest to themselves, would sell him into the arms of his most cruel enemies, tho’ to be butcher’d by them and mangled on an infamous gibbet. Where then is the common sense in reposing a confidence in a fickle, false, fantastic, faithless World: where no services bind, no friendships engage, no blood cements, no authority can give security: And not even Holy Faith guarantees us from treachery, oppression, guile and persecutions?

Alas, dear Fellow-Christians! Appearances deceive us. Let us not judge of human happiness by the outside dress of man; or we shall ever be the dupes of error and illusion. Tear off the gaudy velvets from this man: Strip but that woman of her glittering trinkets: Remove but the skreen of silks, brocades, and rich attire and pompous equipage, which hide to vulgar eyes the wounds and the secret sores of this exalted man, of that great lady, who pass upon the public for happy: And what a load of bleeding anguish may we not discover in their breasts! For, believe me, Christians; these two truths you may rely upon: Calamities pay no respect to pomp or splendor; and in this

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vale of vanity, no fragrant roses grow without their pungent thorns, no savory fruits without their venom. *Naaman* was a great Prince in his Country, the general in chief of all the forces of the King of *Syria*; a great favourite with his sovereign, honour'd, honourable, valiant and rich, as Holy Writ informs us. * But then! — With all these advantages, he was a *Leper*. *Haman* was a great politician, and raised himself by his politics to the highest pitch of glory a minister could reach. But then, what did the eminence of his station avail, but to serve him as a scaffold, to render his infamy more conspicuous, when exalted on a gibbet? *Rachel* and *Leah* were both ornaments of their sex: *This* for her fruitfulness, and *That* for her uncommon beauty. But then were they not both the reproach of it too: The *Former* for her barrenness, the *Latter* for her deformity? To behold a princely *Abshalom* at the head of a formidable army, revered for his rising greatness, admired for his splendid appearance, and universally beloved for his personal gracefulness, what a prospect of enviable glory does it not afford? But ah! To what matter of pity does not the scene shift, when we behold him hanging from a tree by his entangled locks; and see the curling honours of his head twisted into a wreath of punishment and disgrace for him? Behold but a royal *Baltassar* sitting at his splendid entertainment amidst a gaudy train of wives and concubines; attended by all his nobles; feasting on the most delicious viands and exquisite wines; served up in silver and gold, and invited to jollity and mirth, by elegant music, with whatever else can charm his senses and sooth his mind to dissipation of care and thought. Does the bare ideal fight enamour you? Ah! be not dazzled into error by the flattering false appearance. In an instant shall you see this very same gay thing all pale, dejected, scared and deeply melancholy. Three words are written on the wall by an invisible hand; and immediately all the splendid scene is reversed into the melancholy rehearsal of a dismal tragedy upon the eve of being acted effectually. For this object of envy, whom you see thus rioting on the summit of worldly splendor, shall, ere the morrow's sun sets, be seen sunk beneath the wounds of many a mortal weapon and weltering in his own blood. Does the sight of a gaudy *Jezabel*, looking from her palace-window, drest in all the splendid gew-gaws of majestic attire, charm you into admiration of her? Have patience but for a moment. This is one of those wretched mortals, who, through a long laborious and unwearied pursuit of the world, is now reaching to the ultimate enjoyment of it. See then the glittering thing, in reward of all her past fatigues in the service of that, thrown out of her window for dogs to lick her blood; and for birds and beasts of prey to feed on her flesh. Such, such is

the inviting recompence of an ungrateful world. Such is the nature of this idolized world: Either to grant it's followers no felicity, but rudely to declare open war with them; or to act the secret treacherous persecutor, and, granting them a passing taste of false happiness, of seeming honey, to embitter it with overpowering gall, and mingle it with lingering poisons, and inevitable deaths. Go then, fond mortals! if such treatment enamours you, go on in the pursuit of a perfidious world, which as you see, and as *St. Cyprian* witnesses, "Smiles with a cruel intent; flatters with a purpose to deceive; and decoys out of a murderous design."

But methinks, I hear you answer me: "Well then, if the world be such as it now appears to be; we must even henceforth flee from it. We must even take a voyage to the east; re-people the long-deserted deserts of *Thebais*; and, thus leading mankind into woods, make one grand wilderness of the world." But ah Christians, the world is in yourselves: It goes every where with you: and is not confined to the towns you inhabit. To quit the world intirely, you must quit yourselves in part: And to do this; undoubtedly, one efficacious means would be the renouncing communication with the noisy multitude, for a life of retirement and solitude. Such then among you as are at liberty to do so, would do excellently in so doing. Still to say thus much to all, would be saying too much. It is not to make you all flee from the world, that I have painted it to you thus odious, thus like itself. The tender love indeed which I have for you all, makes me earnestly wish, that my little labours might induce you to flee from it's ill-usage. And O would you had but your own interest at heart as much as I have it for you! Soon would you be out of the reach of all it's insults.

A great number of the *Israelites*, in the wilderness, were visited, I remember, by death arm'd with the borrow'd sting of avenging serpents. And *Moses*, to cure the remaining part of them, caused a brazen image of a serpent to be erected in a conspicuous part of the desert, where every one who found himself wounded might behold it, and so rid himself of the venom imbibed. In fact, no sooner did they look on the serpent in effigy, than they found the virtue of it superior to that of the real serpents; whose poison evaporated through their pores, in measure as they inhaled the antidote by their eyes. O Christian Worldlings, or rather worldly-minded Christians! Not unlike to theirs is your wretched condition. You are miserably stung by a venomous world: You, O ambitious, by it's bloating honours: You, O covetous, by it's corrupt interests: You O lecherous men, by it's putrid pleasures: You O vain-glorious women, by it's puffy vanities. Ah look then, fix a serious eye, on the same world

in effigy; and I pronounce you cured. For, as a reverend Author * observes, "Just as the sight of the serpent was the best antidote to its infectious sting, so is the best remedy for sin, the knowledge of it." Observe but how this serpent-world, swells at the cost of so many unhappy creatures, who, after having too faithfully adhered to it, are now condemn'd, by the traitor, to drag on a deplorable old-age in want, oppression, contempt and every distressful anguish. Nay look but to the treatment yourselves have met with from it, in return for all your assiduity in following it: And if it has, as I dare believe it has, treated you but rudely, but ungratefully; learn, from its past usage what you have to trust to for the future, learn, by experience, to hate it, to flee it, to quit its infamous service, from the noble principle of a just resentment. Nay, if it has even treated you with respect; the more reason have you to mistrust and detest it. For be persuaded, that, those whom it favours, it means to betray. Be assured that, one day or other, it will grossly ill-treat even you. Try then to be beforehand with it: Prevent its malignity; and hate it, flee from it, shake off its shameful yoke by way of caution.

You have now seen, beloved Auditors; nay, I dare say you have already felt the bitter fruits of following this deceitful world. And what is there in them, which may reasonably encourage you to persist in following it on? You have heard, and Heaven grant you do not many of you actually, to your sorrow, taste the recompences it has to give to its followers in the enjoyment of it. Tell me then, what is there in these rewards so delicious, to enamour you with the donor of them? If you can discern aught in this maze of miseries, for the thick night of sin, ignorance, folly and error, in which it is involved; what is it you can see but what must point-out to you the horrid folly of your benighted souls in being so fond of it? O learn then to draw, from these truths, such reflections as may light-up your understandings and give you the knowledge necessary to extricate yourselves from that gloomy labyrinth in which you have been hitherto so strangely bewildered.

III. The principal Reflections, Beloved, which I could wish you, for the present, to make, are THREE. The *First*, I have to offer to you, is a serious scrutiny of your own conduct in life, in order to find out, whether you have not by your own irregularities, and sinful practices, smother'd the way for those calamities which overwhelm you in the world: And if you find in yourselves plenty of faults; begin the reformation of the world, by reforming yourselves. The ship, in which *Jonab* was navigating to *Tbarsis*, was freighted with the

* *Cesarus of Arles.*

cause of a tempest in his disobedience: No wonder therefore, that danger overtook it in a storm. A contrast of jarring winds, tempestuously blowing, raised a sedition in the seas; and Death, rising bolder and bolder on every swelling wave, burst in upon the vessel's side, to stare the anxious mariners in the face. But the mariners less frightened than alarmed at an aspect they are grown familiar to, have recourse to Art to repel the threatening danger. "The sail, *the Master cries*, is too full; it takes too much wind: Let it be reeved, let it be contracted." The sail is contracted: And still the storm encreases. "The yard is still too high: Let it be lower'd." The yard is lower'd: Still the storm gathers strength. "Lighten the ship; Out then with these goods: Out with those wealthy merchandizes: Out with the whole cargo, so we save but our lives." What will not a man give in exchange for his life? The vessel is lighten'd; but alas to what purpose, when the hardness of weather bears upon it heavier and heavier? At length, every stratagem of navigation exhausted, true sailor-like, they apply to that Remedy, which, tho' it ought to be the first, is, generally speaking, the last: In a word, they have recourse to God. "O Lord! Thou who has't the winds and the waves in subjection; and reignest over us and the elements, forbid them to persecute us any longer: *We beseech thee, O Lord, let us not perish.*" Here the Holy Father St. *Jerome*, fixes himself in high contemplation on this joint fluctuation of waters and human spirits; and, eyeing a number of men thus uselessly busied in contracting sails, destroying tackle, casting anchor, throwing over-board merchandize, and offering vows, "Away, *he cries*, away with this fruitless industry. The cause of your calamities is quite other than you conceive it. Throw over that *Jonab*, throw over that *Jonab*, who is the bane of your peace. Remove the Cause of the storm, and the storm shall lose all its power." Even so was it in fact: *Jonab* cast out of the vessel the tempest was spent.

Woman, poor afflicted woman, wedded or rather fetter'd with some savage! does your inseparable tyrant, at every turn, when the Brute prevails within him, force you to swallow many a bitter pill of grief and pain? And do your children, treading in their father's steps, destroy your peace; and, with unnatural insolence of usage, prey upon your very vitals? Alas, poor struggler in a sea of sorrow! Forsaken long since by health and strength, and peace and rest, are you but just enough alive to feel the misery of a protracted death? Ah search within your soul and see, if some undue attachment, some sinful vehemence of passion or affection is not lurking there, and furnishing your adverse fortune

Fortune with fresh matter to torment you. And if you find it; throw it out immediately. "Throw out the *Jonah*, and the storm shall cease." You, O Man of substance, find your affairs going wrong, your wealth decreasing, your wants augmenting: Your merchandizes are wreck'd, the demands upon you are more than you can answer, and your credit begins to sink: Or your lands yield not their usual tribute, your houses, your barns are consumed by fire, your credit at Court diminishes; and, spite of all your prostitutions of Conscience to gain favour there, you are turn'd out of your employments, or cannot attain to preferment. Ah! look into the cause, search within you for the author of your misfortunes. Is there no charitable legacy, no pious gift, no poor man's patrimony confusedly buried in, and swallow'd up by your other wealth? Throw out then these seeds of destruction; Throw out this canker-worm which gnaws away your lawful substance; "Throw out this *Jonah*, who is the cause of the storm you are threaten'd to be overwhelm'd by. Throw out this *Jonah*, and the storm shall cease."

O my dear country! 'Tis now for many generations past, that a furious tempest has been agitating thee, and venting all it's rage upon thee: Witness the ruinous condition thou art already in: Thy noblest blood extinct, or on the point of being so, the largest patrimonies quite consumed, or hastily consuming, or mingled with ignoble, ill-gotten, self-destroying dirt: Whole families extirpated, or totally impoverish'd: Trade in a languishing condition: Whole multitudes, almost, yearly swept away by epidemic pests: Whole cities frequently consumed to ashes: Whole counties half unpeopled, and little better than half starved. And what is worse: The storm, instead of blowing-over, rises more and more: the tempest gathers strength; and the tumultuous sea of evils which overwhelm us swells continually. Not all the arts of human policy we have recourse to, are able to assuage the fury of it's surges, which foam with such incessant rage, as if they would swallow-up intire the already shatter'd remains of this sinking bark. O Dear-loved land! must I be forced to talk to thee thus in an allegory; for want of the heart to reproach thee more openly? Must my bowels of tenderness for thee oblige me to conceal thy corruption; rather than raise a blush in thee by exposing thy misery to open day? Yet does the public good call aloud for some public spirit whose zeal may hunt-out the lurking *Jonahs*, who, with the aliment of public iniquity, nourish the fury of the Heavens against you. Tell me then, dear-loved compatriots, how is the scale of justice managed among you? How are your accounts with Heaven ballanced? Is there no *Jonah* of heresy, infidelity or impiety lurking amidst you? Does decency alone direct your garb,

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to the promotion of public decorum; or rather, does not indecent luxury add public scandal to private vanity? Does modesty accompany your converse; or rather, does not impudicity pollute it? What are the courtships every where carried on among you: Communications of innocence or firebrands of sensuality? What your traffics: correspondences of honesty or so many combats of fraud? What faith is there in you, O Men? And what is your modesty, O once reserved sex? Where is the edification to be seen in old men? Where the piety and zeal to be found in ecclesiastics? Where is your Christian behaviour in the streets, in your shops, in your houses, in your assemblies, in your palaces, in your closets, nay in church; O how many *Jonahs* are every-where to be found! How many criminals! How many crimes! If then there ~~are~~; ah! throw them out directly and appease the storm. Let every one bear a part in lightening the public load, by removing the matter of the public calamity; and "throw out his *Jonah*." For, depend upon it, the Heavens will never cease to persecute us, till we cease to cherish the matter of their fury. Tempests will never make peace with this nation, till this nation makes peace with God. This, Christians; this then is the *first* reflection you should make, at sight of the horrid treacheries you now discover in this illusive world: That the only sure way to better the world effectually is to begin by the betterment of your own lives and manners.

The *second* is, that, since the world is ever thus miserable, thus traitorous, we should never bear to renounce God for the world. It is forever either barefacedly afflicting you, or soothingly betraying you: In short as St. *John* best expresses it, *The whole world is forever set in mischief*. * Ah Christians! Be yourselves then for once, and treat this traitor-world, like a traitor as it is. Let it threaten you or attempt to flatter you into it's service: Answer it as that intrepid soldier of Christ St. *Dioscorus* did the Emperor *Decius*. After causing him to be dragg'd to the foot of his throne, the haughty Emperor demanded his name. *I am a Christian*, replies the Saint. Your family? *I am a Christian*. Your country? Your profession? And to every question still the sum of the sacred hero's reply is: *I am a Christian*. "Insolent Christian, the Tyrant replies! Is it thus thou dar'st to insult imperial Majesty? Learn then to fear it's authority by feeling the weight of it's indignation. Let him be loaded with irons: Let his flesh be torn piecemeal from his bones; and let him be put to the most torturing death." Be it so, says the martyr: I am ready to bear it all; for *I am a Christian*. 'Tis done, he is scourged, he is beat, he is bruised; with iron scorpions they tear his spotless flesh from off his ribs; and then apply to his na-

* St. *John* v.

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red entrails flaming fire-brands. Still the Christian Champion's firmness increases with the increasing rage of cruelty. Still, with the joy of a Paradise in his heart, and all the harmony of grace upon his tongue, his constant note is this, *I am a Christian*. Thus baffled all the force and arts of cruelty, the Martyr triumphs and the tyrant foams. "What? he exclaims, with all the astonishment of disappointed fury. Is there no coming at the souls of these Christians? What are they then made of? Surely of iron or of flint. But no: These yield to fire and steel; while those more harden'd still, resist them both. However-- Softness will oftentimes prevail where rigour loses ground. The marble, which blunts the artist's sharpest tool, will yield at last to oil. . . Well thought on!" The hint is improved. A bed of delicacy is prepared, to shake the hero's constancy by a new-invented way. His wounds are bathed; his sores are dress'd; he is put to bed, tied-down with silken bands; and, when restored to respite from his pains, a beauteous prostitute is brought to him, to assassinate (if possible his soul) whose very body almost seem'd invulnerable. O! here indeed is cause sufficient to make the most intrepid tremble. O! What artifices! What looks! What smiles! What gestures! What language! And what diabolic means did not this instrument of Hell recur-to, in hopes to conquer Christ's unconquerable soldier! But all in vain: Thanks, dearest Saviour, to thy all-sufficient grace. As long as the female fiend continues to attack his purity with bare expression, the saint repels her insolence with all the most bitter keen reproaches which Holy Indignation could suggest. But finding himself too rudely prest at length; for want of other safe-guard to his chastity, he calls his teeth to his defence, bites-off his sated tongue, and spits it bloody in the wretch's face: Lispering out, in elipt and broken sounds, the weighty words: *I am a Christian*.

O Christians of mine! You have not yet asserted your being such, in this emphatic manner. The flatteries with which the world attempts to soothe you, are not so vigorous as these: The tortures, with which it persecutes you, are not equal to those of this courageous Christian. For, as St. Paul says to his Hebrew Disciples, *You have not yet resisted even unto blood, in striving against sin*. * The worst the world does to flatter you, is the saying, "You must try to reach to this or that high post, that you may be upon a footing with others." But then the path which leads to it is strew'd with fraud, with oppression, with perfidy: There is no turning in it which leads to God. Ah! what less then can you say than, "It is not a path for me: *I am a Christian*." Or else the world says, "You must be of this vicious party; you must share in that criminal pleasure; or you must lend

"a hand of help, or connivance to this other guilty pursuit; or disoblige your companions." And is so difficult a matter to resist and answer, *I am a Christian*? In short, says the world: "You must not be seen so often at Church and so seldom at Plays; or you will be laugh'd at for a devout. What, think you, will people say, if you are more pious than the rest of your neighbours? Ah Christians! A mighty deal of courage sure then is required to resist such senseless suggestions, that you cannot repel them, with that reasonable answer. *I am a Christian*. And yet how seldom do you resist them? How often have regards like these such prevalence over you, as almost to make you blush at your Christianity, every time you are caught in any duty of it which is grown unfashionable with the world? How many of you, perhaps, would long since have embraced, not only a virtuous, but, a holy life! How many would promptly and cheerfully answer all the gracious invitations of God to perfection! but for . . . But for what? Ah! what has put a stop to such fine inclinations, if it be not the want of courage and resolution to break with the world in good earnest, to trample under foot it's servile respects, and spurn at it's corrupted maxims? You then, O favour'd souls, favour'd with a happy bias to devotion! Ah! speak aloud the unmanly arguments with which you are, each, so industrious to deceive yourselves,

"O how much sweeter to my soul, would not the company of my dear crucified Redeemer be than all the converse of mankind! O how would I prefer to courts a blessed solitude, where, with my Saviour's cruential wounds in view, I might contemplate his excess of love and goodness for me! But--- if I quit all converse with the world; what will the world say? Gladly would I exchange the profanity of theatres, assemblies, Drawing-rooms and balls for the holiness of God's Sanctuary; and the intemperance of earthly entertainments for the delicious banquet of the Eucharist. But if I should be often seen at the Altar; what would the world say? Every time I put on this gay, this splendid attire, the rag of purple which my Saviour wore, and which scarcely (nay, not even scarcely) conceal'd one half of his precious livid wounds, reproaches me with the crying contrast between his studied poverty, and my affected finery. Fain would I therefore lay aside these gaudy, unbecoming trappings; yes unbecoming for me who am a Christian, a follower of tatter'd Jesus. But if I throw them off; what will the world say? What smiles! What laughter! What jokes? What nods and winks, and shrugs will not ensue? In short, what will the world both think and say; nay do; Or rather what will it not do?"

Thus Thou. O base, O wicked world! Wilt thou then never put an end to the rude war thou hast carried-on against the living God? In vain then has't thou been subdued by Christ's example, confounded by his doctrines, and outlaw'd by his *Anathemas*? O proscribed world! which no example can prevail upon us to quit; no experience of traitorous falsehood can awake us to the knowledge of; no love of God will suffice to make us detest! O feeble impotent, and yet prevailing world! How long wilt thou be the ideal terror of these souls, which, fighting under the standard of the God of Hosts, were made to conquer thee; and which, if they would once resolve in earnest, might become thy conquerors and judges? Ah dear deluded brethren! Respect and serve and flatter this your beloved world, as much as you please: Never will you be able to prevail upon it to treat you one jot more tenderly, more complaisantly, than it has done hitherto. Judge then yourselves, whether or not it can be to your interest, for the sake of such a faithless, fraudulent and thankless tyrant, to displease your Gracious God, and sacrifice your precious souls.

But This is not all. Another Reflection still remains to bring this Sermon to an end. And O! may it fix so deeply in your souls as that this plain Discourse may never have an end in your remembrance. Take the Reflection then just as it naturally flows from what has hitherto been said. The *Night* of this base world examin'd-into, *pointeth-out Knowledge* to our benighted minds: And now if we are not obstinately blind, we must see, that the world is an implacable enemy to all it's followers. Therefore let us once for all, and that sincerely, and that effectually, turning our backs upon it, throw ourselves into the gracious arms of the Almighty, our tender loving Parent. O what a fine example of such a noble resolution is set us by the Sacred Spouse in the *Canticles*. Beaten, wounded, and stript, as She was, of her choicest Ornaments, She recur'd to no earthly balsams to alleviate her pain; to no earthly friends, to relieve her distress; to no earthly garments, to cover her disgrace; to no earthly Judges, to do justice to her injured Innocence. The world treated her after it's accustomed manner of treating others: But by her, who was too wise to be one of It's Followers, It was baffled, scorn'd and trampled-on, in a manner very different from what it was ever used to be by others. And how then did she treat it? Just as you should, Beloved; and just as I would fain persuade you All to do. It's injuries received with passive scorn, She takes no pains to return or even repel them: But straitway runs in search of her beloved Spouse; flees anxious to her God alone. *They struck me, they wounded me, they took away my cloak. I adjure you, O Daughters of Jerusalem, if you shall find my Beloved, that you tell him----*

languish for love. * The world does sometimes indeed cloath it's adherents: But scarcely are they cloathed when She strips them again. "In a moment," says St. *Ambrose* and he says truly, "In a moment all these earthly things vanish away." And often is worldly honour fled past us before we are well sensible of It's ever having been present with us." Nay the Tyrant, not content with stripping it's followers of the dress, it just puts on them, for the sake of insulting them, It even for the most part leaves them cruelly wounded. The instances it affords us of this kind of cruel treachery are so ancient, and yet so recent, so various, and yet so frequently alike, that we must bid defiance to our senses to be blind to them. O what a specious garment is an exalted Post! What a rich mantle is a wealthy inheritance? What a splendid habit is a considerable dower? What a dazzling attire is not an eminent title? But ah! what spoils, what fleecings, what wounds generally ensue? O happy happy spoils! thrice happy wounds, if at length they reach but to bring you to God?

I know not what calamities the Romans bled under, in the auspicious Age of the great St. *Gregory*, which had the efficacy to make them humble themselves before God. But fortunate for them, I know, must be every misfortune which could bring them to so happy a resolution. And so it was: Surfeited with continued insults of a world which they had homaged and served in vain, they found no other remedy to their insupportable evils, after all, than to throw themselves into the arms of God for relief. "Hitherto, says that holy pastor to them, the world lay'd hold of our fondness for it to alienate us from God: But now is that same world so bloated with cruelty, that the very wounds it has given us transmit us back to God." O dearest Fellow Christians!

If then our own times are, as they certainly are, worse than the worst of times past; why are not we, why do not we labour to be, better than the best Livers before us? If the world is grown baser, more cruel and more treacherous, than it ever yet was, why do not we, fired with a holy resentment, despise it, trample it under foot in our affections, and resolutely turn our backs on it forever, to seek with generous ardour our Sovereign Security in God, as others have done? O strange perversity! Unaccountable obstinacy, thus to live in a perpetual jealousy of our ultimate Good; as if a cruel, perfidious Tyrant, like the world, was more worthy than He to give the bias to our tenderness of soul! O my all-bounteous God! Is then the manner, in which thou receivest to thy arms Those who sincerely cling to Thee, so very ungrateful, that running to thy embraces should seem too rude a task, even when the enemy is closely pressing on

* *Canticles* v.

us? Ah injured Majesty! To see in Many of thy creatures, such aversion for Thee and so much sympathy for the world, who would not imagin, if Thou was't not known in all thy works of mercy, that thou did'st feed thy friends with gall and poison more bitter and destructive than the most bitter cup of death, the tyrant world can give? But O how different is thy conduct! O how (to use the experienced prophet's words) * *how good is the God of Israel to the upright of heart!* O how sweetly penetrating to the soul are not the endearing terms, with which thou invitest us to lay aside our causeless base mistrust of thee! O Christians ever dear to me! Hear, and let your souls melt with grateful tenderness in hearing, with what endearments our good God benignly promises to care and cherish all who seek him in good earnest: *Ye shall suck; at the breasts ye shall be carried; and upon the knee ye shall be sooth'd. As one whom his mother fondleth, so will I comfort you.* Have you never eyed a tender mother passionately affected for her new-born infant? Have you never observed with what transports of softness, she places him on her knees, hugs him, caresses him and lips to him a thousand soothing, although not understood, expressions of her love? How does she cherish, fondle, cherish and contemplate the dear, the darling object; and when she gives him suck, how does she press him to her breast, as if she mean'd to lodge him in her heart, or, with her milk, to infuse her very soul into him? Yet is all this but an unworthy gross idea of the caresses, endearments and delights with which Almighty Goodness will regale the souls of such, as candidly renounce the world for God. O my loved brethren! O that you could but taste for once the precious consolations of a soul favour'd by God, because enamour'd with God! O that I could but give you an idea of that paradise which the just enjoy within themselves, even out of paradise; of those sweets, which, in their heavenly contemplations, lift them above their senses and (in some sense) ravish their very bodies out of the flesh: of that sacred ardor which enflames them to a degree of emulation with the angels, and even almost to the transforming them to seraphims in flesh; of those blessed inundations of joy, which drowning them, as it were, in an ocean of delight, cannot be felt without ecstatic swoonings; of those tenderesses, in a word, and those raptures of fore-tasted bliss, which they both consume themselves in and feed upon! O could I but, I say, give you one short, one passing taste of these; then you should own, that God knows how to keep his word with his elect; and that it is infinitely to every Christian's interest to renounce the world to cleave to God.

But what then detains you, that you may not taste them all? By this time, I hope, the heavy

clouds of inconsideracy, which sunk your minds and buried your very senses in the dead night of sensuality, are somewhat dispersed. And now I fain would flatter my just wishes with the assurance, that the thick *night* of this cruel treacherous world hath *pointed out*, to your undeceived understandings, *knowledge* enough to enable you to force your way, through it's intricate gloomy wiles, and reach the purer *ether* of God's enlightening faith in the steady pursuit of christian perfection. Yourself are eye-witnesses of the miseries the world is full of; and so exorbitant they are in fact, that if there be left in you the least spark of spirit, that world must remain void of one single bait to allure you to it. For, as St. *Augustin* has said and much more we may say, "The world is now so maul'd with a variety of guilty scars, that it has lost the very appearance of a deceiver." How strangely infatuated then with voluntary blindness must not we be, if we should henceforth follow such a world? Ah! what then, after all, can it cost us; what shall we risk; if we try, at length, whether God has not something better to bestow? *Taste then and see that the Lord is sweet.* * Trust not to the saints who protest, that they want both accents and ideas to express the sweet excesses of Divine Beneficence which they experience, and which are more easily felt than utter'd. But then, on the other side, neither give credit to the wicked, who basely figure God a niggardly, austere, inexorable being. No: Trust not to either: But *taste and see*; and then believe yourselves. Where will the mighty mischief be? The years, the months, the days you have to live may be many; may be few; and may, for aught you know, be very few. After having then hitherto consumed, nay wasted, so many years with and for the world: venture to spend the rest which are to come, many or few, with God and for God. Venture and try, if, changing masters, you may not better your condition. Try what are the advantages of living in society with Christ, within his saving fold. Either you will find there the sadness, anguish and severities which the wicked describe to you; or you will experience that joy, that gaiety, that ecstatic delight which the blessed promise you. If you should meet with austerities; what will you have lost? You will only have lost the torturing pleasures of a few years of sin (which must inevitably terminate in endless misery) to gain an eternity of immense ineffable transporting bliss. And what austerities ought not to seem delicious to you, once they become the means of gaining you eternal happiness; when the most bitter medicines, the deepest incisions, the most excruciating caustics are welcome, as often as they are needful to restore that health, which, even when re-obtain'd, is still but frail and fugitive?

* *Psalms* lxxii.

* *Psalms* xxxiii.

fugitive? "Ah, says *St. Augustin*! If so much "be tolerable for the sake of living a little longer; "how much more may be endured, to live for "ever?" But what if you should (and very sure I am, that you would) find in the service of GOD all the delights which heart can wish? What a blessed fate would yours be, from a transient paradise here below to be transfer'd to an endless paradise above? to pass from a taste of GOD on earth to the full enjoyment of GOD in heaven? O that this was but rightly understood! O that I could but infuse into your souls the true conception of it! But O my dear crucified love! Make these great truths be understood. Render them intelligible, nay evident, to all: thou who can'st do it. For ah! my tongue, the feeble tongue of a poor helpless sinner, can no more, without the guidance of thy gospel-rays. O Jesus, GOD of splendor! Recall then thy enlivening smiles to our assistance. O

thou bright GOD of day, thyself the day and light of all who live! Utter a word of inspiration to thy Church, that day of faith which borrows all its rays from thee. Bid her again restore us to thy gospel-lights and guide us on towards thee. Say to our souls, *let there be light*, and all within us shall be light. Then shall the *night* of this dark dangerous world *point out fresh knowledge* to our, as yet, benighted minds: Then shall we plainly see what blessings we renounced in quitting thee to serve a tyrant world: Then shall we find what miseries we may escape by leaving that for thee: Then, in a word, made sensible that all our safety, all our happiness, is center'd in thee, and no where but in thee, we shall (I trust) be wise enough to seek thee and blest enough to find thee. O grant it, GOD of Mercy, in thy unwearied bounty, we beseech thee. *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

On the FIRST SUNDAY after the EPIPHANY, being within the OCTAVE.

St. LUKE ii. 52.

And Jesus proceeded in wisdom, and age, and grace with GOD and men.

IN your Blessed Saviour Christ, beloved, you are to consider under one individual person two distinct natures, infinitely different from each other, his divine essence, and his human substance. As GOD, he was uncreated, eternal, infinit and unchangeable; and therefore could suffer no encrease or addition of wisdom, grace, or any other of his boundless perfections. But as man, he was a creature, produced in time, of a limited substance; and, tho', in virtue of his hypostatical union, incapable of any diminution of grace, yet he could and did improve the fruits of that grace to an infinit degree. It is then in this last sense that the holy Evangelist says, the Divine Youth Jesus *proceeded in wisdom, and age, and grace with GOD and men.* Whence we may consequently infer, that this great Master of religious industry let no one instant of his sacred life pass, which he did not signalize with some illustrious improvements of the elevated wisdom and abounding grace which animated him. Ah Christians! What claim can you lay then to the title of imitators and disciples of this great Master, without seriously studying to improve every minute of your lives to the glory of GOD

and your own advancement in his Grace? It is true, you are infinitely wide of having either the degree of wisdom, or the fulness of grace, which he was enrich'd with, from his very conception. But that no way excuses you from copying after him in the improvement of what you have of both. And Christ offers, to you all, a portion of both, a portion of wisdom and a portion of grace amply sufficient to render you capable of imitating him in all his actions, nay of imitating, in some degree, the perfections of his Divine Father. For otherwise, it must be a tyranny in him to command you, as he does, to be perfect, not only as he himself is, but *even as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

It is the avow'd part of a tyrant to command impossibilities. And one impossibility is the following: Christ without the help of the grace of Christ. *No one can come to me, says the Lord, unless the Father draw him.* And no one so much as knows the Father, but the Son and he to whom the Son pleases to reveal him. † Whence it appears evidently, that we cannot comply with any injunctions of Christ, without his supplying us first with wisdom and grace sufficient to enable us to fulfill them. And consequently, as we cannot, without blasphemous impiety, accuse or suspect him of tyranny, it is sufficient, that he commands us, for

St. John 1.

† *St. Luke 11.*

us to know that we are enabled to fulfill what he commands. Enough is it then, that we are commanded by Christ to copy after the perfection of his eternal Father, to render us inexcusable if we do not endeavour at it. Enough is it, that he has set us an example of the perfection he enjoins to lay us under an indispensable obligation of following his example: For to this end, says Christ, *have I set you an example, that, as I have done, so you also may do.* We are told expressly, that our Divine Lord began his mission by first doing and then teaching. And we need only read the whole account of his blessed Life to find, that he sets us no one lesson which he did not first practice himself. And why this but to convince you, that his injunctions are not impracticable. And none surely more practicable than the lesson which is this day set you of improving every minute of your time, in waxing strong in the gospel-wisdom and heavenly grace which Christ affords you. But, perhaps, the bare consideration of it's being practicable will not be sufficient to induce all of you to comply with this important duty: And therefore I shall endeavour to enforce the practice of it,

- I. By setting before you the shortness of human life in it's true light;
- II. By shewing you how much your eternal salvation depends upon making good use of every single minute of it: and,
- III. By laying down some easy rules for improving the whole of it to your infinite advantage.

" Divine Disposer of our lives and actions, by whom all time and even eternity is measured! Give us the grace so to improve each precious instant till to come, that, with thy beloved elect, fulfilling much time in a little space, we may redeem the years we have hitherto spent in vain, and purchase an eternity of bliss."

I. 'Tis a beautiful observation of Seneca, that Mankind are in general more concern'd about living long than living well; whereas a good life is in every man's power, but a long one in Nobody's. For even according to the vulgar acceptance of life, the Oldest Liver of All cannot be said to live long. *What is your life, says St. James? It is a vapour appearing for a little while and afterwards it shall vanish away.* In fact, as St. Jerom says, "nothing can be long which must have an end, and therefore all Time, in comparison with Eternity, cannot but be short." If all Time then is short, how very short ought we not to think the life of man, which makes so very insignificant a part of Time itself; tho' that life were actually as lasting as we generally compute it? And yet, for little we reflect, We shall find ourselves extremely out in our calculation.

It is a common mistake of the major part of men to measure the length of their life, from their entrance into the world, to the time of their going out of it. And it is to this capital error, that the great St. Gregory imputes the perdition of the Wicked. "Therefore is it, says this venerable Father, that the reprobate part of the world run on in the pursuit of Evil; because they vainly imagine themselves to live longer than they really do: While the Just happily steer wide of the pride and lusts of Evil, by considering the real shortness of life." True indeed it is that the glory of the Wicked is often spun out to a considerable number of years, and is therefore by the injudicious consider'd as lasting and solid. But the suddenness of that period, which finally concludes it, too plainly discovers that What is so transient can be but trifling." And what can we attribute this gross illusion to, but to that general false notion of things, which hurries us into confusion, makes us huddle the most distant ideas, and mistake one thing for another? Hence is it that we confound breath with life, and take every upright animal for a rational creature.

Breathing and Living are two distinct Powers; and tho' in a mortal state they are mutually dependent on each other, yet are they absolutely of different natures: Otherwise they would be essentially inseparable. Whereas that they are not inseparable, the angels are a proof: Who are living creatures without the act of breathing. Breathing is an essential faculty of the animal part of man; and therefore, while the soul is confined to it's animal flesh, it must supply that flesh with the power of breathing. But the natural act of the soul is pure life; and therefore, in a state of separation from the body, it is still perfectly living without the assistance of breath. Life then and breath are not the same thing. Not all then who look like men, move like men, and breathe like men, are therefore living men; unless they live, as well as breathe like men. For, in what consists the life of man? In the pursuit of ease and of voluptuous pleasures? No, says Socrates, tho' a Pagan. He lives not as a Man whose soul exists but to regale his carcass. "Eat and drink you must, to live; but it is beneath a Man to live, barely to eat and drink." The life of Man is to study and adhere to Truth; to love and follow Good: They, who live thus, live Men indeed; but They who live otherwise are only breathing Men or living Brutes: No matter which, the difference is not much.

This is a necessary distinction to be made; and it is for want of this, that men are so often and so grossly mistaken in the calculation of their age. A mistake so glaringly obvious, that nothing, but their voluntary blindness, can make it escape their observation. No creature, of whatever species it

be, can properly be deem'd a living creature of that species, any longer than while it acts in the capacity peculiar to it's determin'd nature. A Bee, once it parts with it's sting and desists from acting in the labours of the hive, is no more regarded as a living Bee, but is cast out and reckon'd with the generation of drones. So a Man who renounces his Reason, or acts not conformably to it, can no longer with any propriety be call'd a rational creature; since, with all the outside appearance of a living Man, he is without the reality. No Man lives a Man but in virtue of those rational faculties by which he distinguishes himself from, and raises himself above, the Brutes. To know then the length of every man's life as a man, we are only to reckon the time he has employ'd in the distinctive functions of a rational Being. If then we follow this rational method of reckoning; ah Christians! how short, how very short will not the life of most men appear? And how much shall we not be all obliged to cut off from our usual calculation of age?

Suppose a man to have been born seventy years ago. And this upon a fair average must be own'd the full length of the general date of man. For *the days of our years, David tells us, in themselves are but seventy years.* And if, in the Strong, they are lengthen'd to eighty years; yet that overplus and the more of them is labour and sorrow. Now to measure how long such a person has lived, he must begin by cutting off all the time he has been only in a state of breathing. The first seven years of his childhood then must be struck off in course: For they are generally spent in a total inaction of the rational faculties: Or at best, in a laborious search after the use of them. And as the next seven, at least, are consumed in barely learning how to improve those faculties, they cannot well be enter'd in the account of rational life; which is the life of a creature actually distinguish'd by the superiority he asserts over Brutes. To this again we must add, at least, one third of his whole duration, buried in sleep. And if we should farther add to this all the hours consumed in eating, drinking, necessary dissipation, and requisite employments for the bare support of human nature; actions which however indispensable do not in themselves distinguish him from the common herd of beasts: it will demonstrably appear, that, to speak within compass, full three parts out of four of his whole age must be blotted out of the reckoning of his life as a man. You see, Christians, I have taken no notice of sickness, frenzies, fits or any other of those frequent casualties which rob a man of his reason, and senses, and many times almost of breath. What then if I should throw even these into the balance? What if I should go on and discount all the time which this man of Seventy, has spent in idleness and actions unbecoming the dignity not only of a Christian, but

even of a rational creature; ah my friends! how little, how very little, shall we find left even of that supposed Fourth Part of his duration, in which he may truly be said to have lived the real life of a man! If then the life of the most lasting among us appears to be so very short in reality; what shall we say of those who are cut off long before they reach the venerable stage of Seniority? How long can they be deem'd to have existed as living rational creatures, who are hurried away in the prime of their years? May they not all cry out with the Wise Man, *Our time is like the passing of a shadow?*

II. And yet, Beloved, however short a space a man exists, if he lives like a man during the time he does exist, he has reach'd all the honours of Old Age. He may truly be said to have lived long, who has hoarded up the little time he had, to live well. If your days be filled up with Virtue and Wisdom, you are old enough. But without these, tho' you should breathe on to the age of a *Methusalem*, you cannot be said to have lived a single minute: At least if you chuse to call it life, it is such a life as your domestic brutes, your cat, your spaniel, your parrot enjoy in common with you. "For that man lives in vain, says the great St. *Augustin*, who lives not chiefly to acquire the merit by which he may live to eternity." How necessary then must it not be, Christians, to hoard up all the minutes which this short life allows you towards acquiring that merit?

If you reflect but on the reason for which the Almighty has placed you in this life and allotted you a certain duration on earth; you will easily be convinced that your salvation depends upon doing this. Why then has this gracious Lord granted you time? Is it think you that you may riot in sin, or live to offend him? No, says *ECCLESIASTICUS*, *he hath commanded no man to do impiously, he hath given no man the leisure to sin.* Was it then that you might run through a number of years in idleness and sloth? No, no, says *JOB*, *Man is born to labour as a bird is to flying.* GOD has sent you all as so many labourers into his vineyard, and has agreed with you for your time. Your reward is no less than an eternity of happiness, if you employ that time in fulfilling his blessed will: And no less than an eternity of misery, if you squander it away. Go, says the Lord, and *what is just I will repay you.* † How precious then ought you not to rate that time, on the good use or abuse of which depends a whole eternity? An eternity of happiness or an eternity of misery!

Another consideration, Christians, which ought to make you the more fearful of letting one single minute of it pass unimproved, is, that there is no possibility of recalling it. No, says the Holy Ghost;

*Ghost; * When the Spirit is gone forth, it shall not return.* "There is no price can redeem even "the shortest space of time." Which of you all would let slip a favourable minute of acquiring a considerable title, an estate, or the good graces of your earthly sovereign? And what are all these to the eternal felicity of Heaven, the inestimable favour of your Almighty Sovereign, which each present instant of your lives affords you the opportunity of acquiring? Must you not then be lost to all sense of your own happiness, if you cannot resolve to lay hold of that favourable minute? Can there be any safety for you in neglecting the certain *now*, for the uncertain *future*? The next minute you are never sure of reaching, and the present once gone is for ever irrevocable. "There is no "price then can redeem the least space of time."

Time can be consider'd but in three lights, past, present and to come. That which is to come, is not in our possession, and may possibly never be so: That which is past is no more in our possession: The present is that, which seems most in our power. Yet is it slipping from us while we think ourselves to hold it the fastest. Still,—slippery as it is, if we manage it but rightly; it is worth to us nothing less than an eternity. Say, O ye happy souls above, how came you by the glory which you now enjoy, but by the diligence with which you hoarded up each present minute of your precious lives? Too well you knew the folly of relying on the uncertain future to trust your glory to such airy hopes. Alas unhappy wretches whom methinks I see weeping in hell, and torturing yourselves with fruitless rage! Had you but known the worth of time while yet on earth, as now you know it when too late; what endless sufferings, what ages of despair and blasphemy, might you not, would you not, have spared yourselves! Ah! it was the abuse, the loss of time which hurl'd you all to your irreparable woe. Ah! could you now recall one single instant of it back; how, how eagerly would you improve it! What example would you not set to many slothful Christians here, of the Industry, with which they ought to embrace and cultivate their present moments! But ah! it is now too late to wish; and You by sad experience know, that "there is no "price which can redeem one minute lost."

Tell me then, Christians, You who are so expert in Traffic, so well versed in seasons for encreasing your effects, and so industrious to improve each trivial incident to worldly lucre: How comes it that you are all so backward in improving the precious minutes given you to traffic an Eternity? Oh what a madness, for men, who can trade so wisely for the world, to be so much to seek in trafficking for Heaven; to trifle away, in idleness and absence, a jewel which yields no less a profit, well employ'd, than an eternity of Bliss! Ah Lord! How sadly true is

* *Wisd. xvi.*

it, that *the children of darkness are wiser in their generation than the children of light?* *

Come then, beloved, You who are children of the light, you to whom God has been so lavish of his grace: Learn wisdom from the children of the world. Be you as eager to improve your time, like men and Christians, to eternal gain, as they are, to improve it to their earthly lucre. Do as your celestial Father bids you: *Negotiate till He come.* Hoard up each present minute, as your Saviour did, to grow in grace and wisdom as you advance in age. Consider each instant as your last, improve it as you would your last. For aught you know, it may be such; and this you are sure, that, when it is past, it cannot be recall'd. *Look therefore brethren, as St. Paul advises you, that you walk warily, not as unwise; but as wise, redeeming Time.* But how, you'll say, can we redeem the time already past, since "there is no price which can redeem "the least space of time." This remains still incumbent on me to point-out.

III. There is then, Christians, still a way, and only one, by which you may redeem the longest time you have lost as yet. You are not yet, thank God, in the unhappy state of those lost souls whose misery is irreparable. Nor will it ever be your fate, I trust in God's untired mercy. The oldest of you all have this one minute to embrace Salvation in. And this alone, employ'd in acts of love, repentance, hope and fear, may make up all your past neglects. To redeem, by living over again, one single instant past, is quite impossible. But to redeem them by atonement, by future double assiduity in the improvement of each present minute Heaven shall henceforth grant you, is still at your own option, still in your power. You then, O Christians, who are young or but in the prime of life, remember, that your infancy and childhood, your first and second stage, were chiefly spent in breathing rather than in living: Redeem that time then by your future fervency in improving every minute to gain eternity. Depend not on the next succeeding moment. Young as you are, you are sure of being call'd-away when you shall least expect it; and how soon you know not: Perhaps before the uncertain instant you propose to trust to. And you, dear brethren, whom age or sickness warns to be in constant readiness; embrace each present instant to repair the past neglect of many years, by a degree of fervor in your christian duty proportion'd to the length of time you have lost. You, of all, have the least room for dallying with time. The present instant you can scarce depend on: Much less then on the next. Remember all, that there must come a period *when Time shall be no more, a night as your Saviour tells you, * when no Man can work.* While then you have time, do good; fill it up with

action

* *St. Luke xvi.*

* *St 7 bn ix.*

actions worthy of rational creatures and worthy of Christians. Copy in a word after your Divine Lord, by *proceeding*, through his merit and assistance, in *Wisdom, Age and Grace, with God and Men.*

Now to come at this perfect imitation of him, what have you more to do than, keeping in constant view the several duties of your respective stations, to labour with unwearied assiduity to fulfill them, by a discreet and well-fill'd regulation of your years and months and days and hours? In this great family of human nature there are various states, and different employs; and all demand a different management of time; different indeed in point of distribution of the day, but still the same with relation to the End.

The Sovereign End to which the Time of every Christian, must be directed, in order to be useful is God's eternal glory, the general good of all mankind, as far as each man's station will extend, and the improvement of his own spiritual good, in the first place; and secondly, as far as it consists with the former, even of his temporal safety and happiness. Now the first Means of directing our time to these united ends, is to begin each year, each month, each week, and every single day, with a general oblation of the Whole of it to God. To do which will neither require labour nor expence. How cheaply, how easily may not we say to God, at the commencement of the year; "To thee, my God, I offer every minute of the ensuing year. To thy honour, do I purpose to improve each instant given me, in all the Works of Justice, Mercy, Piety and Christian Industry consistent with my station, and with the opportunities which thou shalt graciously afford me. O grant me many, and add thy efficacious grace to enable me to lay hold on them. But ah! above all, permit me not ungratefully to squander, much less to abuse one single moment with sinful Acts to thy dishonour, nor to the detriment of myself or neighbour. At least, my God, here at thy feet I solemnly protest against consenting to any such ungrateful use of the time thou shalt allow me: Disclaiming, from my heart, every future act or thought of mine, contrary to this, which my unruly passions may hurry me into, when off my guard. For whether acting, talking, thinking; whether awake or buried in the profoundest sleep, to thee I dedicate my time, and every precious minute of it." How cheaply may we not renew this act, at the beginning of each month, and week, and day, and even every hour:

But then, that this act of ours may be acceptable to God, we must give him practical proofs of our sincerity. And how shall we do this but by walking, every one, *worthy of the vocation we have received from God*, as St. Paul* directs, and seeing,

that *all things, which we do, be done according to order.* † The next means then we ought to make use of is, first to weigh the duties of our particular station, and then to regulate our hours in such a manner as that every duty may have it's due time. Without this, let us mean ever so well, we shall often act wrong: And let us be ever so busy, we shall be doing nothing, or doing nothing to the purpose. If we do not plan-out our time into proper distributions adapted to the regular subordination of duties peculiar to our several stations; it is absolutely impossible but we must omit many obligations for want of time to comply with them; while, on the other hand, we shall have an intolerable load of time hanging heavy on our hands, which we cannot fill-up with any useful or laudable employment. O! What an immense deal of precious time is lost for want of a little oeconomy in the laying it out? O! What an immense deal of precious time is miserably misused for want of each man's considering the peculiar duties of his station?

The world, with regard to the use which is made of time, may be divided into three classes of Persons, the wicked industrious, the laborious loiterers, and the impertinently busy. O what untold multitudes are there not of slaves to ambition, avarice, lust, gluttony, fraud and rapin, amongst Christians, from the prince to the peasant! And O how industrious they are in every wickedness! How early shall they rise, how late shall they retire to bed! How little and how broken their slumbers, when they do sleep, though never enjoying a minute's rest when awake, for the incessant anxiety with which they improve every instant to the forwarding their vicious pursuits! What hour, or almost what moment do they let slip unfill'd with some wicked action; with some sinful expression, some lie, some oath, some perjury, imprecation or blasphemy, or at least with some vicious thought or purpose? What one, I say, do they thus let slip, which they do not amply make-up with the regret of many succeeding ones? O! were the children of light but half as wise in their generation, in hoarding up their precious minutes to gain an eternity of bliss, as these sons of darkness are to lay out each single instant in the purchase of eternal misery; what a deal of repentance might they not save themselves?

But, alas, the misfortune is, that many of these, who would tremble at the thought of spending one single minute in evil actions, tremble not to squander whole days and months and years in absolute Idleness: Forgetful, that Idleness is the parent and tutor of every evil practice. Yet can it not be said that they take no pains: None more laborious. But ah! What are all their pains laid-out in? In doing

* Ephes. iv.

† 1 Cor. xiv.

nothing. How does this artist night and day fatigue himself? To see him toil, and sweat, and work, and sweat, and toil again, would make one almost sweat with sympathizing pity for him, but that his labours seem to promise a speedy crop of lasting plenty, ease and pleasure. But, alas, all the gay illusive prospect vanishes with looking-on. In vain he labours and turmoils for bread: The more he toils the less he gains. In vain he robs his eyes of sleep: His want encreases with his labour. And can he wonder at it? Need we demand the reason why? Can we be strangers to a cause so general? The poor mistaken creature is labouring for the world, and not for God: Is toiling by himself and not with God: Depends, in a word, more on his own endeavours than on his Maker's blessing. Therefore is it, that he cannot spare, from his labours, one hour on a holy-day, to obey the Church and pay his tribute of public homage to the Almighty. Therefore is it, in short, that he cannot afford his Sovereign one minute in a morning, to sanctify his labours of the day to him; no nor one thought throughout the day to call down from Heaven a blessing on his toils. Ah! what then is such a one but a laborious loiterer? And what innumerable numbers have we not of such laborious loiterers! What too are your giddy, soft, effeminate young men, whose hours are all engross'd by dress, and sport, and idle perambulations round the town, if not in gaming, drinking, and every dangerous fatiguing party of diversion; where, if they are not doing evil; they are, at best, but doing nothing. What are they, I say, but so many laborious loiterers of time? What are our gay young women, whose chief anxiety is, not to fill up, but to evacuate time? How eagerly do they study, plot, consult and lay their heads together, whole weeks beforehand, to massacre the hours of seven days in such miserable trifles, as, but for the mischief they are big with, would be beneath the dignity of christian preachers to take notice of? What tedious painful hours are spent in dress, what days are murder'd in rising tradesmens shops, for ruffling's sake; in viewing silks, in sorting china, in buying gew-gaws; in idle walks, unfruitful chat, unseasonable visits; in balls and plays and masquerades and other dissipations? O what laborious loitering! And yet what are our coffee-houses, taverns, public walks and public places fill'd with, but with such laborious loiterers?

But still you'll say, perhaps, "These are egregious trifles to entertain a Christian Audience with. When did such impertinences ever make the matter of a Sermon before?" I believe *Never*, Christians: Perhaps, till now, there never was such need of it. Perhaps such impertinences never stared a Christian Preacher in the Face, so much as they do at present, when they are be-

come the fashionable distribution of almost every Christian's time. Or, if they did; perhaps, the Preacher's tenderness might make him blush to reproach Christians with shamefully mispending that time, which very heathens were so jealous of. And to hear an unenlighten'd *Seneca* saying to his disciples, "A great part of life is past, and all which is behind is in the hand of Death; Act therefore so, as that, by improving each present day, you may have the less dependence on the morrow," who can forbear blushing to see Christians trifle away time, as if their life was never to end? But many of you, it is plain, are not sensible enough of your folly to blush at such trifling, why then shall your teachers blush to expose it to you? If such laborious loitering be beneath the dignity of a Preacher to reprove; ah! why is it not beneath the dignity of a Christian to practice? Shall you be trifling with destruction and we look-on, in Silence? Is it then an insignificant trifle to loiter away so much invaluable time, which your Almighty all-gracious Maker gives you to repent and do penance in, to appease the Divine Anger, to aspire to the regaining of your lost inheritance, to acquire Grace and Virtue, to conquer your natural activeness in evil and langor in good, to press forward towards the society of Angels and to win the blessed prize of unterminable Glory? Is it a trifle to live a laboriously idle life, which, as *St. Bernard* justly remarks, "Is mother and nurse of every giddy action, precipitates the most fortified into vice, suffocates the most experienced virtue, and paves the ready way to Hell!" Is it a trifle not worth notice, to loiter away the precious minutes given you toward, purchasing an eternity of bliss, in the senseless pursuit of temporal transient sweets; in which, according to *St. Augustin*, "There is nothing but labour, perpetual fear, and dangerous enjoyment; unaccompanied by providence from the very beginning, and in the end attended with repentance? O wretched, wretched, wretched trifles, if such laborious loiterings may pass for trifles! Ah! where, O rich, are your fruits of the fatiguing, wanton, tasteless, senseless, dissipating labours you engage in, to murder time with, in the pursuit of fleeting pleasure? What one advantage is there gain'd towards an Eternity of happiness? What is the product of all your incessant toils, O Men of labour, but disappointment without one slender help to everlasting Bliss? And you, O Spiritualists, who often waste the flower of your days, in kneeling when you ought to work, in courting human praises more than heavenly blessings, in conquering every thing but your pride and passions, in practising every part of piety but that of giving up your hearts to God and consecrating wholly to his glory all your actions: Tell me, what advances do you make towards Heaven? Ah! what are you all then,

then, but egregious triflers, laborious loiterers; the sum of all whose labours is, *doing nothing*; the fruit of all whose toils is infinitely *worse than nothing*? Ah! how like is your case to that of those *foolish of heart*, who, as *David* says, * *slept their sleep of dissipation, and worldly sollicitude, grasping at fleeting joys, or false uncertain riches, but, alas, when they awaked they found nothing in their hands?*

"But! What then are so many men, forever busied, some in affairs of state, some, in the labours of the bar, some in divinity, some in physic, and some in the necessary study of domestic good? Are all these but laborious loiterers? Are all these toiling to a fruitless idle purpose?" No: Heavens forbid! If they are acting, each, according to good order; if, in conformity with their peculiar stations, they are regularly acting with subordination to the dictates of God, of his Church, and of their own consciences, they are true labourers in God's Vineyard and shall bring forth in good time, plenty of fruits worth labouring for. But ah! how many among these are acting out of character; anxious and active in every one's vocation but their own: In short, extremely busy; but impertinently so? How busy is this priest in making matches, managing a law-suit, trafficking on change, or transacting this or that other family's affairs; how assiduous at painting, fiddling, cards, or politics or plough? An excellent encomium This (if all his industry be refer'd to God) for a Proctor, a Lawyer, a Merchant, a Steward, an Artist, a politician or a farmer. But when a Priest, call'd to preach, to catechize, to instruct, to pray, to edify, and to be the father of the family or flock he has in charge, busies himself in such, or any other, secular concerns which may obstruct the business of his holy Calling; is he not acting shamefully out of character? And what then can he be but an impertinent busy one? "An Ecclesiastic," says *St. Jerome*, busied in "traffic, or selling to some the interest he has with others, or managing the income of Widows is more a tradesman than a clergyman." And this the Holy Father looks upon as such a dangerous absurdity, that he bids us, "shun a trading or *intriguing* Priest as we would a spreading pest." In reality of all the absurdities, which are capable of inverting all order in human society, the Two greatest are—A Priest neglecting his holy function to busy himself in the management of secular affairs, whether of the state or of a private family:—And a layman, whether Prince or peasant, boldly intruding himself into the Holy of Holies, presiding in the Sanctuary and giving laws to his pastors. A monstrous birth will never fail to shock the senses. A human creature with a lion's head, or a lion with a man's would give us horror. And shall it not

* *Psaln lxxxvii.*

shock our understandings, to see the more unnatural inversion of decency and order in rational society, and still much more in religious oeconomy? To me, a fighting Priest, a Soldier playing the Divine, a Lawyer prescribing physic, a Physician prescribing politics, and a tradesman neglecting the Christian industry necessary towards the support of his family, to loiter all his time in Church; or the mistaken matron, who, without rule or order, gives herself up to every good work but that of her domestic duty, are sights more shocking than all the monstrous births, which frightened or inverted nature can produce; And so they must be to every thinking christian. However busy they may be, their business is foreign to their calling; and therefore all impertinence. God is the God of order and not of confusion: He created the world, *in weight and number and measure*:* And will not be pleased with any actions of ours which break through the orderly disposition of his providence. Therefore is it, (to use the words of the sacred spouse in the *Canticles* †) that *be hath order'd in us Charity* itself: And therefore is it, that *St. Paul* exhorts us to observe a strict decorum and prudent regulation in our actions. *Let all things be done*, says he, *according to order*.‡ Without this, let us be ever so intensely applied, ever so incessantly employ'd, we are at best but impertinent busy-ones, taken up with every thing but what alone concerns us. And O! what a wretched waste of time must not such busy impertinence be attended-with? How is it possible, thus acting, to imitate our heavenly Master by proceeding in *Wisdom, Age, and Grace with God and Men*? And if we do not proceed in wisdom; we must precipitate into folly: If we do not improve the grace of God; we must lose ground in his love, and in the just esteem of all men: And, the longer we subsist only in a breathing consistency, and neglect to improve our time as rational creatures and Christians, the farther we draw from the honours of old age; and the more time we have to redeem.

What then have we to do, Beloved, to redeem the time we have hitherto mispent, and to avoid the incurring any farther arrears for time? What I say, have we to do but seriously to reflect, each on our several callings, and the duties peculiar to them; and, after weighing them well, to regulate all our actions, words and thoughts with strict conformity to them, according to the prudent order of time, and place, and manner? This done, under the direction of God and his Church. Nothing will remain for us to do, but to sanctify both our time and the actions which fill it up, by zealously referring all to God, and to his Glory. This may be done without much cost or labour, without much study or much strength. The Prince upon the throne, the judge upon the bench, the Soldier in the field, the trades-

* *Wisd. xi.* † *Chap. ii.* ‡ *1 Cor. xiv.*

man in his shop, the servant in her kitchen, the peasant at the plough; may give their time and thoughts to GOD as easily as the sacrificer at the altar. There needs but acquiring a good habit of offering up our hearts to GOD in a general direction, night and morning: And accustoming ourselves to fix deeply in our hearts and minds the presence of GOD with us. If we but use ourselves to the reflecting frequently, each day, that the Almighty Majesty is present with us every where; we shall not want sentiments of homage and affection for him, nor words to express them. The Monarch who thinks on GOD, when he puts on his Royal Robes, will humble himself before his Majesty, and say: "O my dear JESUS! Would this purple garment was like thine, a very rag; a rag only to cover wounds and sores endured for love of thee. But since thy will is otherwise, O King of Kings; thy will be done. Only keep me from priding in the pomp thou givest, or prostituting the power thou hast raised me to. O GOD give thy judgment to the King, and thy justice to the King's Son. || If it be to thy Glory, to the good of this people, to the salvation of my Soul; add days upon the days of the King of thy making, to encrease in virtue and be a Father to thy people. So will I say a Psalm to thy name forever and ever, that I may render my vows from day to day." *

The judge, who views his GOD with inward contemplation, while he is trying his fellow-creature, will naturally bend his heart and lift his thoughts to him for light, in these or such like words: "O GOD, by whom all Princes rule, and Judges decree Justice! † give me the knowledge and discernment to judge aright. Then shall I be immaculate with Thee, and shall keep myself from my iniquity. Then wilt Thou, O Lord, reward me according to my justice, and according to the purity of hands and heart, with which I desire to pronounce sentence in this cause." If GOD be present in the Soldier's mind upon the day of battle, he'll not forbear to call upon him for help, and say, "O GOD, who art a shield to all who put their trust in Thee! || to thee alone I flee for safety. Accept this act of obedience to my Sovereign. And if there be injustice in the cause I fight for; impute it not to me, who as a subject may not dispute my King's commands. Far be it from me to delight in blood. No, scatter thou the people who delight in war. § And accepting the innocence of my intention, be to me a safeguard. Thou art my GOD, O Lord, Lord of my Salvation, overshadow my head in this day of battle." * If fordid lucre stifle not, in the tradesman's breast, the thoughts of GOD and Heaven; what

|| Psalm. lxxi. * Psalm. lx. † Prov. viii.
† Psalm. xvii. § Prov. xxxv. § Psalm. lxvii.
** Psalm. cxxxix.

shall obstruct him, in the very midst of his dealings, from lifting-up his soul to GOD with fervent ejaculation: "O my GOD, make me as careful for Eternity as for this Life: Let me not, trafficking for the present world, become a bankrupt in the other; but rather keep me so strictly just, that I may purchase some new grace by every bargain which I make; and, seeking first thy heavenly kingdom, obtain by virtuous industry becoming thy disciple, the addition of all things else consistent with thy Glory and my eternal good!" So, if she will but often think on GOD; easy is it for the Cook, who kindles, stirs, or scorches at the fire, to sanctify her toils to him with saying: "Guard me, O GOD of my Salvation, from the heat of thy eternal wrath. Come, O Holy Ghost, replenish my heart, and kindle in my breast such a fire of thy love divine, as may consume, within me, every earthly affection which does not lead to thee. Leave not about me the least matter for sensual flames to feed-on. But accept this work and every future action of my life as homage paid to thee. And mercifully make me so fervent and so faithful in employing all my hours to thy honour, that I may happily escape all future burnings." So finally, if the poor labouring Hind who drives the team, or guides the plough, be taught (and be it his Pastor's care to teach him) to keep the presence of GOD as frequently as may be in his mind; he may, without encrease of labour or expence of time, lift up his heart to GOD in some such Prayer as this: "O my Saviour! So, I beseech thee, guide my feet, that every step I take may lead me nearer to Thee. Let me not be like these horses or mules, who have no understanding. Grant me the grace to cultivate my soul with as much Industry as I plough this land: Sow in it the precious seeds of Grace and Virtue; and help me so to improve them, that I may reap at length eternal Glory." Thus may we all consecrate every the minutest action of our lives to GOD, and live in constant correspondence with him; varying our ejaculations with our actions, and suiting our expressions to the sentiments of piety, which the reflection on his presence gives us. And O! what a deal of time may we not thus redeem? O! what ages of piety may we not run-over, and what treasures of merit may we not hoard up in one single day thus spent? Ah Christians! Improve then these easy means to practice: And lose not an Eternity of bliss so easy to be purchased. See therefore, Brethren, that you walk warily: Not as unwise, but as wise; redeeming time. * Imitate your heavenly Master in the improvement of each future instant of your lives: that You, like him, may proceed in Wisdom, Age, and Grace with GOD and Men. And

* Ephes. v.

tha,

that we may do it (Every-one) the more effectually: Come, join your hearts with mine and let us lift them all to God. And Thou, dear God, accept our joint petitions. Late as we come to thee, reject us not; for with converted hearts we come, full sorry for the ungrateful use we have made of all the precious minutes thou hast given us to work thy Will and our Salvation. Accept then, Lord, our present love for thee: To thee we henceforth

dedicate each minute of our lives to come: And since we cannot live over-again the time we have idly spent; we'll wish, for love of thee, to live an age of piety in every future instant. Sleeping or awake we will be all thy own from this day forward. O! keep us such on Earth, that we may ever be so even in Heaven. This we implore, O God of boundless bounty: *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

On the SECOND SUNDAY after the EPIPHANY.

St. JOHN ii. 1, 2.

There was a marriage made in Cana of Galilee: and the Mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited, and his Disciples to the Marriage.

MARY at a marriage! Can a Virgin have business at a wedding? But what had JESUS to do there? What could the Son of a Virgin, the author and pattern of purity and sobriety, have to do amidst the riotings of a Marriage-feast, where, if we may believe a certain Divine,* there was drinking to excess? Much more; (*may I not ask?*) if this be true, what end could Christ propose in promoting that excess, by the miraculous conversion of Water into Wine? Had I a tongue as fluent in blasphemy as the pen of this ecclesiastical Champion for luxury, I should no more blush to say, than he blushes to print, that Christ did all this to convince you, Christians, that "All men must have to do with some vanities," nay with some vices. For, says our Pigmy sworn to a giant in his own conceit, "Our blessed Saviour came eating and drinking," was present at Weddings, Feasts and Entertainments; nay, at one of them, work'd a miracle to make wine, when it is plain there had been more drank than was absolutely necessary for the support of nature (and therefore at least enough) and consequently something (more than enough) had been indulged to pleasure, when the miraculous wine was drank." Did you not already know, that the man, who dares utter such impious aspersions of the Son of God, is that fractious Goliath, who everts his sonorous vacuity against the armies of the Living-God, with the same peevish impotence, with which he falls upon other heresies in the parabolic attempt to defend his own; you would hardly suspect such a one capable of the assurance to stile

himself a Christian. But, content with praying and trembling for such inconsistent creatures, I shall leave them to the Almighty to convert or confound. You, I hope, are too well-establish'd in Faith and piety, to be otherwise affected by such impious Doctrines than with horror and pity.

Had there been any excesses committed at this sacred entertainment; had there been more drank than was necessary; no Christian can suppose, that That Divine Lord, who purposely took Flesh to preach-away and (by practice) overthrow the pomps and vanities and luxuries of the Flesh, would have countenanced them with his presence, much less encouraged them at the expence of a Miracle. How warmly did he express his dislike to the profanation of the inanimate Temples of God in the zeal he exerted against the buyers and sellers, when he cast them out of That at Jerusalem! * Who then, without being lost to themselves, can be so lost to respect for their Saviour, as wickedly to imagine that He would call his Omnipotence to his assistance, to encourage men to pollute, by luxurious drinking and wantonness, the living Temples of God in their hearts? What other end then could Christ have to answer, in honouring this wedding, not only with the tacit approbation of his divine presence at it, but even with the expressive applause of a Miracle? I'll tell you, Christians.

The honours of the Marriage-State had been establish'd, not only by the laws of God and Nature and the joint consent of mankind, but even by the just prescription of several thousand years, a prescription in short as old as the Creation, when our blessed Redeemer came upon earth, to invite us, by his doctrine and practice, to the more exalted state of virginity. The Almighty himself was the first who render'd Marriage honourable, by instituting it in Paradise, when he gave the Woman to the

* Dr. T-p.

* St. Math. xx. i St. Mark xi. St. Luke xix.

Man. * And when the general corruption of mankind incensed him to drown the World in an universal deluge, the only people who escaped the dread effects of his wrath, were a few virtuous persons engaged in the state of Wedlock, --- *Noah* and his wife, the sons of *Noah* and their wives. † In the old law the dignity of Matrimony was rated so high, that no honours or wealth could afford happiness without it. --- That alone was deem'd an inheritance in itself. *He who possesseth a good woman, says Ecclesiasticus, beginneth Riches.* † On the contrary, *Where there is no hedge, says he, the possession shall be spoil'd; and where there is no wife, he mourneth in want.* || Other happinesses in life were set light by, as capable of often flowing from the contemptible source of human prudence; but the blessings of a matrimonial state were considered as invaluable, because they were conceived to be the immediate donation of Heaven. *A House and riches are given by Parents, says the inspired Author of the Proverbs, § but a prudent wife is properly a gift from the Lord.* Such high esteem was Marriage held in, when the Divine *JESUS* to raise us to a higher esteem for the charms of virginal chastity, after chusing a Virgin for his Mother, lived himself the life of a virgin, made virgins his chief intimates, and gave the first counsel, encouragement and example to his Disciples to embrace a life of religious Celibacy.

Now this extraordinary doctrine and conduct of the Son of God would probably have been construed, by the weak, as an abrogation of Marriage and of the honours till then paid to it; had he not, at the same time, given us the most manifest proofs that it was far from his design, by raising the merit of a single State, to lessen the worth of a wedded One. He came, as he tells us himself ** *not to break the law but to fulfill it.* And therefore, lest any should mistake his counsels to a life of Celibacy for a prohibition of the Conjugal-State, he ordain'd, that his immaculate ever-inviolable Virgin-Mother should be wedded to the chaste *St. Joseph*, before she conceiv'd: He himself personally compares the spiritual banquets of grace and glory to the feasts at a Marriage; and, not only honours one of those feasts with his sacred presence and that of his blessed Mother and beloved Disciples, but even exerts his power of Miracles to do credit to the new-married couple. Nay of a bare remedy, as marriage was, against sin, he raises it to the dignity of a sacrament, and makes it an instrument of augmenting grace.

Notwithstanding then the greater excellence to which Christ has raised the state of virginity, he has taken nothing from the dignity of Matrimony;

* *Genesis* i. ii. † *Genesis* vi. vii.

‡ *Ecclesiasticus* xxvi. || *Ibid.*

§ *Prov.* xix.

** *St. Matth.* v.

but, on the reverse, has made it more honourable than it could be before. *Marriage is honourable in all, says the Apostle.* * Yes, Christians, Marriage is a truly honourable State, to all who engage in it lawfully and wisely. But, alas, how few are there, who engage in it thus! This is the grand secret, which the major part of mankind, even among Christians, seem wholly at a loss for. And therefore is it, that out of the almost infinite numbers who run headlong into this state, there are scarce any who enjoy the comforts and graces of it in this life, and very few who have any chance for Salvation in the next. It is this melancholy truth which urges me to lay hold of the opportunity the present Gospel affords me, to obviate so general an evil, as much as in my little power lies: Which I shall do by considering,

- I. The Reflections, which All single persons ought to make, before they part with their Liberty: And
- II. The Obligations they lay themselves under, when they do part with that Liberty, by Marriage-promise.

"O Thou, dear Lord, who didst vouchsafe in person not only to approve but bless the Marriage-State! Deign farther to direct the Choice of all, who shall henceforth engage in it; and give thy grace to such as have already chosen, well or ill, to reap Salvation from their past mistakes by patience and fidelity."

I. A common as well as pitiful objection, of heretics, and apostates, against Celibacy, is, That Precept which seems to have been annex'd to marriage in the beginning of the world: *Encrease and multiply.* † But the extreme folly of this shift must appear to every man, who will but make use of his understanding. For, if this was a precept; it it could only be a temporary one, given for the sake of peopling the world: And consequently, as No Law is obligatory any longer than while the End, for which it was made, is subsisting; once the world was sufficiently peopled, the duty of propagation could be no longer universal. And that it was not consider'd as such, even in the *Old Law*, we may alledge many probable conjectures. Had the duty of propagation extended to individuals; it had been a crime in such as were left widows without children to continue in that State: Whereas voluntary widow-hood was so far from being deem'd criminal, that it was an honourable State, and the next in reputation to a marriage-life. Add to this, that the holy prophets *Elias, Elisha* and many others, whom we find in sacred Scripture to have lived a single life, were favorites of GOD;

* *Hebrews* xiii. † *Genesis* i.

which

which they could not have been, had they lived in a constant breach of his Commandment, as they must have done had the precept of Marriage still subsisted.

In the *New Law*, however, it is past all dispute, if we will not renounce both Scripture and Reason, that no individual is under any obligation to part with Liberty for a Marriage-State, unless manifestly call'd to it by God. Virginity is a counsel of Christ. And *he, who can take, let him take*, says our Divine Lord. † But who could lawfully take this counsel, or how could Christ give it; was there any obligation to the contrary; neither Virginity then, nor Marriage, is a Commandment. Concerning virgins, says St. PAUL, † *a Commandment of our Lord I have not: But counsel I give, as having obtain'd mercy.* Indeed where the Spirit is weak, and the Flesh presses hard upon it; if there be no prior vows, or indispensable impediments, it is the advice of the Apostle, * *that every man have his own wife, and every woman her own husband, to prevent the evil of fornication. For 'tis better to marry than to be burnt.* † But Marriage is still free, and so far from being a commandment, is at best but a simple indulgence. *I say this by indulgence not by commandment*, says our Apostle. *For I would have all men to be as myself, † that is, as he soon after explains it, unmarried.* §

Nevertheless, as this great Apostle observes, † *every one hath a proper gift from God, and every one's gift is not alike, but one so and another so.* What then, Christians, are you to do, but seriously to consider, before you enter into a Marriage-State, what gift you have received from God. Remember: *This is a great sacrament in Christ.* ** By this he signifies his Mystic Union with his Church, and his spiritual Intimacy with the soul of Man. It is not therefore to be approach'd to with any sordid or servile views; but with such a purity and holiness of intention as may purchase the grace it abounds with, to those who are call'd to it: A grace raising and dignifying those functions, which, in themselves, are but abject and groveling.

Every State absolutely requires grace to fulfill the peculiar functions and duties of it, and that grace must come from God alone. It would be errant presumption for any man to engage in a state of life, in which he had no room to expect the blessing of God's assistance. And what assistance or grace can you hope to receive from God, in any State of life you should embrace, without his calling you to it? Should any servant of yours, instead of doing the duties of the post you hire him to, obstinately busy himself, without consulting

† St. Matth. xix. † 1 Cor. vii. * 1 Cor. vii.
† Ibid. † Ibid. ver. 6, 7. § Ibid. ver. 8.
† Ibid. ** Eph. v.

you, in other offices even for your service; would you be pleas'd with him, or think yourselves any way bound to reward him? What if, for example, your footman should insist upon being your butler, and your chamber-maids should leave the important affair of dressing your head, to take the business of dinner out of the hands of your cook; would you think them worthy of your favour, or not rather of your frowns? And why so? Are they not labouring for your service? "Yes, you'll answer, serve us they do, but not as we would have them: Their service is ill-placed, and therefore unacceptable: They are obeying their own will and not ours: We hired them for servants, and they will be masters and mistresses." Ah Christians! Do not you do the same with respect to God; if you rashly blunder into a state of life without first considering seriously, whether, or not, God has really call'd you to it? Whatever services you may study to do for the honour of your Almighty Master in such a state, if they are not the services he calls you to, what blessings, what graces, or what recompence, can you expect from him for them? Have you not reason to expect, that he will punish you (as you would your own servants, for the like contempt) by withdrawing his protection from you, turning you adrift, and abandoning you to yourselves? And O! What must be the consequence of so dreadful a disgrace, but a variety of distresses in this life, and irreparable misery in the next! You then, who have yet your state to chuse, be wise: And avoid these evils while you may, by first consulting God and your own hearts, to know the state which God has call'd you to, and as the Apostle advises, *walk, each, in the vocation you are called in by God.*

Marriage is one vocation: But it requires serious deliberation to know, whether, or not, that be yours. It cannot then be wise or lawful for you to enter rashly into it, without enquiring into this. And how shall you find this out? Why take example by the couple in this Gospel: Invite Jesus and his blessed Mother to counsel and assist you: Recur to your Divine Lord for the light of his Grace, and pray the Holy Virgin to intercede with her adorable Son to direct your choice. Invite also his disciples; consult the doctrines of the Church, which they planted under Christ in order to know, the will of God. If you incline to a state of wedlock, weigh well the difficulties of that state against the disposition you have to encounter them. Remember it is a state for life, a knot which nothing but death can unloose. Have you sufficient discretion for the management of a family? Have you knowledge and prudence enough for the education of children? Have you steadiness enough, not to grow giddy with future prosperity; or fortitude enough to bear up against unforeseen adversity?

You,

You, young men, promise yourselves the height of endless happiness in the possession of a young, rich, beautiful and sensible wife, amiable children, and a mighty deal of love. But tell me: Who shall ensure to you all this? And suppose, you should be disappointed; are you fortified with resolution and grace enough to take the disappointment like a man and a christian? Whatever wife the Church shall give you, it will give you *for better, for worse, for rich or for poor, in sickness and in health, till death shall part you*. Ask your own souls then, whether you can be faithful to this promise, or not, when the Church shall require it? The youngest wife you can marry must grow old in time; Can you then resolve to love her with the wrinkles of *fifty* as well as with her bloom of *fifteen*? What, if her fortune should prove an ideal one? Or granting it to be real, what if unforeseen accidents, or even her ill conduct, should reduce you both to beggary; can you resolve still to love her, cherish her, and struggle to support her, as well in poverty as in plenty? Or will not love subside, where indigence begins? Will not your fidelity break loose, and your promise vanish with the substance? The completest beauty must fade: Time will dig furrows in the smoothest cheeks: The most striking graces will vanish before a long fit of sickness: Frequent breedings, infirmities, and innumerable casualties, may metamorphose the very woman, whom your heated imagination raises to the dignity of an angel, and turn her to an object of horror. Can you resolve, under such a circumstance, to love her with equal tenderness and sincerity as when she appear'd the most lovely in your eye? But I'll suppose the woman, whom you propose to marry, a lasting beauty. What will all her beauty affect you, when one month has made you used to her face? Can you resolve to love her on, when her person shall strike you less? Perhaps you think, her sense will be a stay to your fidelity, when her beauty is gone. Happy you and she, if it prove so! But what if the ill use she may make of that sense, should make you wish she had none? What if she should prove ill-natured, fractious, dissolute, or ever-so extravagantly unruly? Can you resolve, with tenderness, meekness, inviolable fidelity and good example, to study all means to reclaim her; still to love her; and no otherwise to correct her than as is most conducive to her good, your mutual peace, and the edification of your children? If you have these dispositions in you; you have some reason to think, you are call'd to a state of wedlock.

But you, maidens or widows, what dispositions are you in? You may, perhaps, from vanity, hopes, or something which looks like experience, promise yourselves the most enviable state of felicity in wedlock: And there is, at least, a possibi-

lity of your being deceived. Now, believe me, the disappointment is cruelly insupportable. How then are you disposed to meet it? Does the comely form of any man please you? Have a care: The gratifications of the eye are often follow'd by the most exquisit tortures of the heart. But you, ten-to-one, are very indifferent about the person of any man, so he does but admire yours. But what if a man should tell you, you are handsome, or endowed with all the perfections your sex can aspire to; can you therefore promise yourselves happiness in wedlock with him? Perhaps, he has said the same, nay sworn it, to hundreds, before you, and deceived them? What assurance have you that he speaks as he thinks? And granting he does, may you not be sadly convinced in a month after marriage, that men can change their minds? What dispositions then do you find in yourselves to bear the killing disappointment, when the first wane of the marriage-moon shall transform you from the idol of his folly, to the object of his indifference; if not of his hatred and contempt? Can you, for the love of God, continue your love, your tenderness and fidelity to a monster, who, not content with squandering what should support you and your infants, on harlots, gamesters, or at least idle companions, shall reel home half beast, half insect, to load you with filth and ill usage? If he should reduce you from affluence to beggary, can you find in your hearts, as faithful wives, to nurse him in sickness, to support and work for him in prison or in want? Can you return his brutal moroseness with assiduity to please him, his barbarity with tenderness, his grosser injuries with love and fidelity? When your affectionate behaviour shall be call'd tulsome, your reservedness shall be matter of jealousy, your tears be construed into hypocrisy and your smiles into treachery; when all you say shall be interpreted into offence, and your very silence be reputed a crime; can you still bear it all with patience, fortitude and resignation. I myself have known more than one instance of women unjustly wreck'd to death by slow degrees with brutes of this stamp: Women of merit; and women, who, perhaps, thought as well of themselves before marriage, and promised themselves as much happiness in it, as the most deserving of you can do. And what has happen'd may happen again; and (it may be) to you. Are you then sure, that, under such trials, you could still support the character of chaste and prudent wives, and work your salvation with God? If so, there is great probability that you are call'd to a marriage-state. Else believe me, young men and maids, you know not what you do by running rashly into this state. For it is at least a hundred to one, in embracing wedlock, without being thus prepared for the worst, but you wed your damnation.

Never be deceived by the fond notion that pomp or

or riches will any ways compensate the essential breaches of harmony in a marriage-state, or render them less pungent. For in the first place where discord reigns oeconomy seldom rules, and want of oeconomy will sink the largest fortune to indigence. And secondly, all the riches of *Peru* cannot cure a bleeding heart. Without peace the choicest jewels are but the trappings of misery in a conjugal state. A coach and six may waft you from one end of the kingdom to the other, but cannot carry you one step from your discontent. Think then, on the worst you can meet with in marriage; and think, how able you are to bear-with it like Christians, before you venture into a Marriage-State. Think on the cares attending the education of Children, and your own abilities for the task. As well as the comfort which good Children afford, weigh the stinging anguish of Parents when they turn out vicious or foolish. Judge, from what you now feel from the apprehensions of it, what you may feel from the reality. If you can undergo every hardship for the sake of them and your Consort; are you sure, if both should prove as you wish, that you can resign them to God, when he shall please to take them from you. Are you in no danger of loving them more than God and losing your Creator for his creature? All these points ought you seriously to consider before you engage in this State, if you wish not to buy a long and woeful repentance with a hasty determination.

They who enter into Wedlock, engage in a dangerous unequal lottery, where even they, who embark upon right principles, have scarce a trivial prize to hope for out of a thousand blanks, modestly speaking. What then have They to expect, who rashly run into it at a venture? In other Lotteries you know the worst before-hand, and therefore may the more easily set down with the loss. But here it is scarcely possible even to fear bad enough; and nothing less is at stake than your ease, your tranquillity, your Life and Salvation. What prudence then does it not behove you to make use of, to make a tolerable choice. It is your business to see whether God calls you to this State: But when you find you are call'd to it, it is the advice of friends, which will best assist you to fix your choice well. First then consult your own hearts, your virtuous and vicious inclinations to find-out, whether you may hope for the means of godliness and salvation in Matrimony. Then consult your Parents, that their experience may enable you to steer wide of folly and passion in the choice of the person with whom you may enter into it.

Your Parents may and ought to assist you with advice, and no-doubt will advise you for the best, if you but consult them. They have a natural right to this deference, and it is your interest temporal and eternal to pay it them. They may assist you with

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a necessary and proper establishment. And God may and will, in reward of your obedience, give a blessing to your choice: *Riches are given by Parents, but a prudent Wife or Husband is properly a Gift from the Lord*, says the wisest of Men. * Deferve this blessing then, You who are call'd to it, by recurring to God in prayer. Invite your Saviour to your wedding, and consult him before-hand for proper motives. Away with all considerations of flesh and concupiscence; let your motives be pure and holy as the Sacrament you approach to is. Let *Jews* and *Infidels* couple together for sordid Avarice or Ambition: Let your chief care be to chuse a virtuous person, with whom you may join in a holy struggle for Christian Peace in this life, and glory in another; Let swine herd together for the gratifications of sensuality: But You, like Christians, wed with the pure intention of subduing the lusts of the flesh, and regulating your passions to the Glory of God and the public Good. And thus disposed, embrace in the Name of God this holy honourable State. For thus disposed you will be truly fit for it. But first it is fit you know the obligations which you lay yourselves under in embracing it, and parting with your liberty by Marriage-Promises.

II. There are two sorts of matrimonial promise, the one in future, the other in present: Neither of which can prudently be made without the presence of your Director, or some other Priest, and your parents or other proper witnesses. The persons promising must be at an age of discretion sufficient to know the importance of the state they engage in, perfectly free, and capable of choice, and no-way controul'd or over awed to it. Decency requires that both the parties be not over-young, and prudence demands that they be not greatly indigent. Else, what chance can their children have for prudent education; or how shall they support each-other in sickness, wants and other casualties? Or finally what probability is there, that such raw novices in life as boyish husbands will follow the Apostle's counsel and *having compassion for the weaker Vessel*, † treat her like a companion and help-mate rather than use her like a slave; for want of which, such strange disorders fill the world, and bring disgrace upon the holy Sacrament of Marriage so honourable in itself? In all well regulated cities, what care is taken to inspect into the state of Arts and Sciences and every other calling in life! Is Marriage then not worthy of some public care? That is the state of highest Importance to the Commonwealth of human Nature. Yet all which is consider'd in it, is sordid interest or reptil pleasure. What horror must it not create, in every thinking Christian's breast, to see such numbers hurried in to it by other's folly or their own, more fit to go to School, like Children as they are, than to breed

* *Prov. xix.*

† *St. Peter iii.*

K

or

or bring-up Others! What can such rashness tend to but to make the parties mutually unhappy, their Offspring doubly wretched in their parents and themselves, and to spread the world with scandal and disorders, as the present age can witness.

The parties engaging in this sacrament are ministers of it; and therefore ought to be in a state of grace, if they mean not to commit a double sacrilege. Therefore is it, that the Church requires them first to go to Confession and Communion. This is the way to invite JESUS and his blessed mother to the wedding, and this the surest means of securing their blessing to it.

When two persons invested with power and liberty to contract, have solemnly promised Marriage to each-other, they are from that instant the property of each-other; and without the most legitimate causes, judged such by the law, are inseparable for life, and equally bound to avoid all foreign amours as if they were actually married; and that under pain of the same species of guilt, *that is*, adultery. And yet from the time of such promises to the celebration of marriage, both parties are bound to observe the utmost decorum of modesty and purity towards each-other, as much as if they had no engagements to one-another. For however indissoluble their union be of body and will, yet they cannot without sin take any of those liberties which would modesty before marriage, tho' allowable after it. For this reason it is, that the Church absolutely forbids that persons promised to each-other should dwell under the same roof, 'till married. During that interval all your mutual conversations ought to be holy, and all your leisure spent in prayer to GOD, to implore his grace and assistance, to receive well and make a holy use of so holy a sacrament.

When I talk of promises of future Marriage, I chiefly mean such as are made on wise and honourable terms, after mature deliberation, with the advice and consent of friends, and in the presence of GOD's minister. For as to those senseless engagements which young giddy persons so often run into, without advice or thought, in a fond fit, *tete a tete*, and frequently with very little knowledge of each-other, tho' once they are made, they become equally obligatory; yet are they as foolish as they are unlawful. Have a care, young women, how you suffer yourselves to be drawn into a snare of this sort. When a young man asks you to promise him marriage, do you consider what he asks? nothing less than your liberty, and seldom less than your ruin. If his intentions are honest, and both of you are at liberty; why is he not as ready to marry you as to promise you Marriage? Or if all circumstances do not actually suit on both sides; why is he afraid to trust the continuation of your esteem for him to the continuation of his own good behaviour? Believe me, if you had but a just sense of your own safety

and of the general baseness of young men; you would rather be mov'd to indignation than to compliance by such a request. Never vainly flatter yourselves that it is the excess of his love for you which prompts him to it. No, it is more often the effect of a treacherous design suggested by the light opinion he has of your discretion. Not one man out of a hundred asks a woman to promise him marriage, but with the ungenerous (and generally speaking, I dare say) mistaken notion, that, if he can but prevail with her to part with her liberty, he shall easily persuade her to part with her honour. And tho' this, perchance, should not be the intention of your lovers, for it is hard and dangerous to judge of particulars; yet it is greatly to be fear'd, lest the levity you discover in parting with the one, should embolden him to attempt to rob you of the other. And what can be the consequence but shame and misery? For, generally speaking, once a man has gain'd before marriage the low ends for which alone the generality of men are corrupt enough to engage in it, he despises the most solemn ties by which he attain'd to it, and seldom repairs the injury done but with a greater, by devoting to shame the woman he has decoy'd into ruin. Beware then, of such capital mistakes. Never part with your liberty till you part with it for good. When all obstacles are remov'd, when your affections are mutually fix'd, your motives sanctified, and nothing is wanting in conscience, person, or circumstance to unite you wisely and lawfully but agreeing on the day, then it is time enough to promise marriage. 'Till then, if you value your peace in this life, or your happiness in the next, never enter into any such hasty engagements. In all the experience I have had in life, I never yet found one of these huddled promises, but what has been attended with a great deal of wretchedness to one or the other party, if not to both.

"But what! What, *you'll say*, has all this to do with a religious Sermon? A great deal, Christians. For I would fain persuade you, that it is even your worldly interest to be good Christians, by being obedient to the disciplin and decorums taught you by Christ and his Church. And therefore is it, that I have said thus much towards convincing you, that the Gospel requires nothing of you, for your eternal Salvation, but what is greatly conducive even to your temporal happiness. Be wise then and follow her directions, that you may not by one hasty mistaken step purchase a life of fruitless repentance.

When *Jonathan* was sentenced to death for having undesignedly broken the fast, which his Father *Saul* had by oath obliged all his subjects to; the thought of death was less insupportable to him than the reflection on the trifling satisfaction which was like to cost him so dear. It was the thought of paying down his life for one passing taste of a little honey,

honey, which unmann'd him, and drew from this death-defying terror of the *Philistins* that melancholy melting complaint, * *I have but tasted a little Honey and lo I die!* If you, when convinced that are call'd to the marriage-state, do but wisely follow the directions of the Church; If you consult God, consult your own heart and make use of all the discreet precautions you can in determining your choice; if you are cautious of parting with your liberty, and faithful to your promise and to decency, once you do part with it; though you should be disappointed at last, all the evils you can meet with will be render'd supportable to you by the pleasing reflection, that you did not bring them on yourselves. Whereas should you be hurried away by a few minutes flattery into a life of conjugal misery, how intolerable will your loss of happiness appear to you, when you shall reflect on the insignificant trifle of pleasure for which you consented to part with that happiness. With what inexpressible Anguish will you not be reduced to cry out, *I have but tasted a little Honey, and lo I die!*

Endeavour then, young people, by prayer and prudence to avoid an unhappy choice. As for you, Married People, this advice is too late: All I can at present advise you to is, like the industrious Bee, to suck honey from the bitterest flowers. Think not what I have said, however, totally foreign to your improvement. If you are not at your liberty; Many of you have Children here who are at theirs. And if some of them are too young to benefit by what

* *1 Kings xiv.*

S E R M O N

On the THIRD SUNDAY after the EPIPHANY.

St. MATHEW viii. 2, 3.

*Lord, if thou wilt, Thou can'st make me clean....
I will. Be thou made clean.*

WELL, young people, which of you all is out of humour with the Marriage-State? Which of you all is less in a hurry to put on the conjugal shackles, for any thing I have said to restrain your eagerness? If aught; has not contradiction rather made you more earnest to try, whether what I have said be real or fictitious? In a word, instead of blunting your curious impetuosity, have I not sharpen'd the edge of it? Before my last Sunday's Sermon, I was apprehensive of nothing so much as of incurring the indignation of your suitors, by putting some of you soberly on your guard against the follies and frauds too generally practis'd in modern

I have said; you are not too young to conceive the same sentiments, and to bring them forth to them, when they shall be mature enough to conceive them. Remember, that, tho' you cannot without mortal sin controul their choice, or sacrifice them against their liking to any companion for life, whatever worldly advantages may prompt you so to do; yet are you bound in conscience to apply all the good counsel, tenderness and prudence you can make use of, in order to bias them as much as possible to a better choice. Do it then, that they may be happy and you in them. Teach them to walk in the vocation they have received from God, and strengthen your precepts with example by walking so yourselves.

I have a great deal to say to you concerning the duties of your state, but must leave it to another opportunity. Your patience, I presume, as well as my time, is quite spent: And I have this encouragement to dismiss you, without adding any thing more, that there are few here but will gladly excuse me from any improvements of mind or heart which I can give them at the expence of their amusements. I shall therefore conclude with beseeching God to grant you all the grace, before marriage or in it, to make such a holy use of this Sacrament as may render you worthy of the benefits of it, that living here as Christian Men and Wives ought to do, you may continue a glorious union beyond Death, and be as Angels in Heaven. Which *In the Name, &c.*

courtships. But yourselves soon convinced me, I had little to fear from such a quarter. A certain something on the gay countenances of many of you gave me room rather to fear, that I was labouring only to make you merry at your own cost. "It is fine talking," say'd You: or, if you did not say it, you look'd it. It is fine talking against Wedlock, for "men who may not engage in it. But what must become of the world, if all thought alike? And what judge can a Priest be of marriage?" Yet have a care, dear children: It is dangerous jesting upon serious truths. Priests are in a mid-state between single persons at full liberty and persons who, by marriage, have parted with liberty. Happily restrain'd from the woes of wedlock, they are free to all the enviable comforts of celibacy. Priests then are parties wholly unconcern'd in the interests,

terests of the one and the other sort, on every other score than that of fraternal charity; and therefore the fittest to decide between both. Their function obliges them to hear and see daily but too many of the miseries attending marriage, not to have daily fresh reason to thank their Almighty Protector for mercifully calling them to a safer, happier, sublimer state. Certain indeed it is, that they purchase not their knowledge at so dear a rate as they do, who are actually married: Still is their experience not more dubious for costing less. However, if you are resolved to think that bought experience is best; ask married people, whether, or not, it can be safe for you to enter inconsiderately into the Marriage-State.

What say you, married folks? Are there no dangers in Wedlock, no unforeseen difficulties to encounter, beyond all which single persons can feel or surmise? Ah! Are there none actually among you, to whom I am now speaking, who, if you might with safety and prudence throw off the forced serenity on your countenances, would with wringing hands confess, that you daily meet with but too many and just reasons to wish, you had never rashly enter'd into it. And why, but for the grievances and manifold obstacles to Salvation, which you are daily subject to, either from your past folly in parting with liberty too hastily, or from your present imprudence in neglecting the means of making your yoke easy to one-another and to yourselves?

"And what then? Is marriage to bear the blame of all? Is matrimony to be made accountable for all the miseries of married people?" Not, Christians, no: Far be it from me to hint thus much. Already have I told you, on the contrary, that marriage is an honourable state, establish'd, confirm'd, and render'd honourable by God himself; instituted in Paradise; blest with advantageous promises in this, and in a better world; honour'd with the presence of Christ, and by him raised to the dignity of a Sacrament. Marriage then, is very far from being contemptible in itself: If therefore, O married Christians, it be brought into contempt by the unclean use which is too frequently made of it among you; the greater reproach is yours for bringing scorn upon so sacred and honourable an institute, by your rashly running into it, without being call'd by God, or by perverting the graces of it when you are absolutely engaged in it: Enough, I presume, I may have said to the single against the *Former* of these grand mistakes, to render them excusable should they henceforth be guilty of such rashness. And therefore, in this discourse to you alone, O wedded persons, I mean to address myself; to try, if, perchance, I may recall you from the *Latter*, from that abuse of matrimonial graces to which you owe the matrimonial miseries you labour under.

And O! how many of you stand in need of every help to raise you up? For ah! how wretchedly are most of you overwhelm'd with woes of your own creating? What, but your own perversity is the cause, that that sacred institute which the Almighty establish'd on purpose to preserve you from misery, sin and uncleanness is made the matter of your corruption and anguish? Sensible of the sufferings you groan under in wedlock, you are too indolent to search into the true source of them which is in yourselves: And therefore you throw all the reproach of your evils on the marriage-State, instead of throwing it as you should, on your own perverse use of the graces annexed to that state. For no other end did God raise Matrimony to the dignity of a Sacrament in the new Law than for this, that such Christians as engage in it might never be at a loss for graces sufficient to reap Comfort and Salvation from it. But the misfortune is, that matrimonial grace is the least thing which Christians in general seek for in Matrimony. The misfortune is, that instead of using that grace you neglect it, instead of improving, you forfeit it, for the corruptions of the flesh. And yet insensible, that the cause of your miseries is wholly in yourselves, when you are prest by them beyond your power of bearing, you seek for remedies every-where but in yourselves: Like the *Leper* in our Gospel, crusted over with uncleanness, you lay all the business of your cure upon God, *Lord, if thou wilt, Thou can'st make me clean*; but take no care yourselves to co-operate with him in completing your cure. Whereas, says the Lord, *I will: Be thou made clean*. Be but every-one of you as willing as I am; be but as diligent in improving my graces as I am liberal in granting them; and all your uncleanness shall be cured, all your evils shall be removed. All your sufferings then, O married people, are the fruits of your own supineness. To remove therefore, this fatal cause of your evils in marriage shall be my present study, by laying before you two things:

- I. The chief ends, which, as Christians, you ought, all of you, to propose to yourselves in the Marriage-State: *and*
- II. The main obstacles you ought to struggle to remove, in order to attain to those desirable Ends.

A steady attention to the *One Part* will, I hope, finish to convince you, that the great purpose of all for which God calls you to a Marriage-State is, as *St. Peter* says, * *that you may by inheritance, possess a Benediction*: And a practical study of the *Other*, may enable you to deserve that Benediction, and to render it lasting,

* 1. *S. Peter* iii.

" O! Grant it loving Saviour, for thy Mercy's Sake: And since, whom GOD has join'd, no man may separate; give to all wedded Christians, the grace of Christian Love, and such a perfect harmony as links thy Church with Thee. Let not their union be, like that of fetter'd fiends, the aggravation of each other's guilt and misery, but rather a reciprocal incitement to deserve the blessings thou hast call'd them to."

I. Marriage, of itself, Beloved, is neither a virtue nor a vice; but a stay to the one, and a curb to the other. Yet is it, by means of the sacramental grace which Christ has dignify'd it with, become, as it was, the sanctuary of every virtue. Matrimony then, so far from being contemptible, is a holy and a noble state; rich with the greatest blessings to such as engage in it wisely and persevere in it chastely, soberly and piously. It is even necessary to Salvation, for such as have not the gift of continence. For without that gift, there is no medium between the necessity of marrying or of being burnt. And therefore St. Paul* commands in such cases that, *every Man have his own Wife, and every Woman have her own Husband.* This however is not the case of every man nor of every woman: And therefore every-one cannot be included unexceptably in this precept. To such then as can contain, the liberty of marrying is only a simple indulgence; and that only where there are the dispositions essentially requisit to fulfill the duties of this state. For where any of those dispositions are totally wanting, or greatly deficient, it cannot but be extremely dangerous, and consequently rash, to embrace the state of wedlock; in-as-much-as, till those dispositions are acquired, no persons can have reasonable room to think they are call'd to it by GOD. For GOD, who tempts no man beyond his strength, calls none to any duty or state in life, without first offering them the graces necessary to fulfill it.

One thing however is infallibly true, that once a person has embraced a matrimonial life, whether originally call'd to it by GOD or not, he is from that minute call'd by GOD to use his utmost endeavours to live holily and undefiledly in it: And GOD is ready to supply him with the necessary graces for that purpose, if he will but recur to his Divine Majesty for them. The first efficient cause and author of marriage is GOD himself, who, sovereignly in love with chastity, to imprint the deeper notion of it in the minds of men, ordain'd that one man and one woman should be join'd inseparably together, in faithful love and spotless union for life, by inviolable compact, and under such restrictions as he himself was pleased to lay down. *It is not good,* says the Lord, *† for Man to be alone: Let us make to him a help-mate like to himself. And they shall be*

* 1. Cor. vii.

† Genesis ii.

two in one flesh. It is GOD then who ties the marriage knot; and therefore whatever couple are lawfully married, whether particularly call'd by him to that state or not, of two, they instantly become but one flesh and inseparable. *Whom GOD has join'd together let not man separate,* says our Saviour Christ. * Now as our gracious LORD, on one hand, is too merciful to make the means of salvation a snare to any, and, on the other, is pleased to join inseparably in wedlock even those who inconsiderately embrace it; it is evident, that the original want of vocation to marriage exempts not those from the duties of it, who without that vocation, have been rash enough to enter into it: Especially since the divine Grace is never wanting in this life, to such as are at any time ready to co-operate with it.

If then, Beloved, any of you are conscious to yourselves of having rashly enter'd into a conjugal state, without sufficiently consulting GOD, to know whether he call'd you to it or not; you are not therefore to despair of being able through his grace, which is ever ready at your call, to fulfill the important duties of it. No: That would be enhancing one fault with a greater. You have now now jointly set your hands to the plough. It is too late to look back: And all you have now to do is to look carefully forward and study to turn your past imprudence to the best account; by improving the sacramental grace and other blessings annex'd to the state you are in, the better to answer those Christian purposes which GOD expects you to pursue, since you are married.

There are Six Views, which every Christian Couple, who are not mutually agreed upon virginal chastity, ought to pursue in wedlock, if they mean to be happy here or hereafter. The *First* is to obey the absolute Will of Almighty GOD, which is, that all, who are at liberty, and cannot contain, embrace a state of wedlock, and that all, who do embrace it, live up to the duties of it, with inviolable chastity and fidelity. *This is the will of GOD,* says St. PAUL, *† your sanctification.* And how shall you attain to that † sanctification but by walking; as the same apostle says, *worthy of the vocation you are call'd in; tho' not call'd to:* If GOD then calls you to a life of conjugal chastity; you thwart the Divine Will, and put one obstacle to your own sanctification, unless you embrace that life. And call'd to it or not call'd, once you have embraced it, the unalterable Will of your GOD, who is the GOD of Purity, is, that you preserve that chastity with inviolable fidelity. And the desire of fulfilling the will of GOD in both these, is one of the great ends you ought to pursue in Marriage to obtain Salvation by it.

* St. Math xix.

† 1. Thessalonians iii.

† Ephesians iv.

God, to give you an idea of his other Divine Virtues, such as his Truth, his Justice, and Benevolence, has manifested himself to you in his Works to be a true, equitable and merciful Being. So, to imprint in you a lively notion of his purity, he instituted the sacred dispensation of Marriage, that by the observation of chastity and other conjugal restrictions, you might acknowledge him for the Pure and Chaste Spirit he is. Another end then which married persons ought to pursue is to represent, in the holiness of their conversation and in the purity of their conduct to each other, the spotless purity of the God who unites them. How wide then are those Christians from answering this sacred end of Marriage, who carry their mistaken fondnesses for each other to such indecent liberties as Modesty must even blush to think of, as continent Heathens must blush to commit, and as savour more of palliated prostitution than the religious rites of a Christian sacrament. Ah Christians, married Christians! Remember, that there is a conjugal modesty as well as a conjugal charity required of you, without which no sanctification can be attain'd by you, your very mutual fondness cannot subsist long, and the Holy Ghost will not delight to reside with you.

The *Third* End to be pursued in Marriage is the virtuous Propagation of Mankind, by a chaste procreation of children, with the sublime and Christian view, that, by this means, a full Church may be gather'd on earth and continued from age to age, to know and serve GOD, by the Ministry of the Gospel in this life, and to sing and celebrate his praise to eternity in the next. This sacred purpose the young *Tobiab* had in view, when married to his Virgin Bride. *Lord, thou knowest, says he, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blest for ever and ever.* * And This even *Plato*, tho' but a Heathen, could see the decency, necessity and advantages of so well, that he lays it down as an essential duty in Marriage: "Let this," *says he*, be the chief consolation in Marriage: "This the main study and care of wedded people, to perpetuate human nature; that leaving children of their children, these may substitute in their places, faithful servants and adorers of God forever." Again, "It is the duty of parents, says he, to beget and educate children, who may hand down life to posterity like a resplendent lamp; that there may never be wanting Some of their race, praising and honouring God, in the ob-servance of his Laws." O my God is it possible, that sentiments so worthy of perfect Christians, should flow from the uninspired pen of a Pagan. Or shall it be said, that a Heathen has given such a lesson of perfection as thy profest servants want the heart to practice?

* *Tobiab viii.*

How came *David*, a Man according to GOD's own heart, to incur the disgrace and forfeit the protection of his Almighty Patron, in polluting his own and *Bethsheba's* marriage with wicked adultery? How came the chaste *Susanna* to merit the miraculous protection of Heaven in favour of her innocence, after preferring death and temporal infamy to the loss of her conjugal faith. Ah! It was because the *first* forgot, while the *second* never lost sight of, that other great End for which Marriage was instituted, *that is*, to be a remedy against the hateful confusion of irregular and promiscuous concupiscence. Marriage is a great and holy sacrament appointed by GOD, not for a screen, but for a curb to any variety of libidinous pursuits. And no longer than this End is kept in view by Man and Wife, no longer can fidelity, peace, or grace, abide with them. From the moment that either loses sight of this end, what nameless indiscretions will not ensue? And if These are not carried to the most criminal lengths; what jealousies, at least, will they not create in the breast of the opposite party! And Peace ever departs by the same door, through which Jealousy enters. What feuds then, what endless Strife, and irremediable disorders in this life, and what irreparable damnation in the next, must not they prepare themselves for, who invert the sacred purposes of this holy Institute, by making that a cover for lawless lewdness which was intended by GOD, and ought to be used by men, as a bridle to their licentious appetites! Look round the world, consult all historians sacred and profane; and you will find, that this criminal forgetfulness has been the fatal cause of the most important mischiefs, which have befallen human nature. It was probably This which lay'd the world under water; this was the first step to the ruin of *Sodom*. This bury'd *Troy* in its own ashes; subverted the Monarchy of *Rome*: And without running so far back for instances of the evils it has caused, it was owing to nothing more than the want of keeping this end of marriage in view, that One of our own wretched Princes, * gave the mortal blow to Religion in our unhappy Nation, and open'd the floodgates of heresy, infidelity and Atheism, which have now almost overwhelm'd this miserable land.

GOD has inseparably join'd Man and Wife, that they may educate as well as beget children, and may be mutually assistant and consoling to each other. Brutes are incapable of Reason, Virtue and Grace; and therefore, once they are begotten and rear'd to an age to provide for their hunger, Providence has thought fit to permit, that the brutes who begot them should not only lose all tenderness for them, but even all knowledge of them. But it is quite otherwise with Mankind: Their Offspring, as well as themselves, are endow'd with Reason and

Freewill,

* *Henry the VI.*

Freewill, to know and serve their Maker; and are capable of Grace and Charity to love and invoke him. *How then, as St. Paul observes, * shall they invoke in him whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a Preacher?* For tho' God has been pleased to reveal himself to Man, by the means of his Church; yet has he not thought it necessary to make himself known, by immediate Revelation, to particulars. The proper knowledges of a Christian then must be acquired by a Christian Education. And who so proper to instill that education by Precept and Example, into children from their earliest infancy, as the parents who instill'd life into them? This then is the *Fifth* End which Married Christians ought to pursue in the holy State of wedlock.

The Last and greatest of all is, that they may mutually console, assist, and encourage one-another, amidst the difficulties and labours of temporal life, but more especially in the constant struggles after eternal felicity. It cannot then be answering the design of God in rendering Man and Wife inseparable for life, for them to live in strife, enmity, malice, fractiousness or untowardness with one-another. No: the love and harmony of Man and Wife ought to be reciprocal, ardent, pure and unchangeable like that of Christ and his Church. *I will, says St. PAUL, † that the men pray in every place: lifting up pure hands without anger and disputing:* But as becometh good husbands likewise, says St. PETER, † dwelling with their wives according to knowledge, as to the weaker feminine vessel imparting honour, as it was, to the coheirs also of the grace of life, that your prayers be not hinder'd. Men then are to love and cherish their wives, to compassionate them and bear with their foibles, as of the weaker vessels: Men instead of despising or ill-using their wives, on account of their weakness, are to regard them with honour, as coheirs and fellow strugglers with them in grace and eternal life: Nay more, they are never to disturb, by brutal anger, and broils, that peace of mind and heart which is so necessary to qualify themselves and their wives for the duty of incessant prayer. *Men love your wives and be not bitter towards them, says the Apostle §.*

Here, Husbands, is a positive Precept for you without exceptions. Whatever faults then your wives may have, you are bound to love them. Whatever provocations they may give you, nothing will ever justify your treating them with bitterness. To study to reclaim them, when greatly faulty, you may and ought. But even That must be done not with severity but with tenderness; not with morose and rude treatment, but with gentleness and

* Rom. x. † 1 Tim. ii. † 1 Peter iii. § Colossians iii.

sweetness; not in hatred or indifference, but with an ardent and generous affection, free from dissimulation, compulsion or idle jealousies, and with a readiness of soul to lay down your lives for their salvation. *Husbands love your wives, says St. PAUL, * as Christ also loved the Church, and deliver'd himself for it, that he might sanctify it.* Christ loved his Church, and how did he express his love; by cruelty and severity? No: but by the utmost signs of tenderness; by pouring forth his precious Blood for it's sanctification, and cherishing it in holiness, like his own body. *So says our Apostle, † so also men ought to love their wives as their own bodies.*

In this, O Husbands, you will find your own interest, if you allow yourselves time to reflect. Once married you are inseparable for life, and however indifferent you may grow to each-other, to whatever distance you may remove your dwellings, your interests are forever so indivisibly link'd, that it is impossible Either should enjoy perfect peace without the Other's sharing in it. Your mutual happiness then essentially depends on your mutual union of soul. You cannot hate or ill-treat each-other without hating and ill-treating yourselves. *He that loveth his wife, loveth himself † says St. Paul.* Can you then, you who are generally so very fond of yourselves, be such traitors to your own interest, as not to use all your industry to support this conjugal love towards the inseparable partners of your pleasures and pains? No Man, says the same divine writer, § ever hated his own flesh but nourisheth and cherisheth it as also Christ the Church. Men then, be wise, be friends to yourselves and love your wives as Christ also loved the Church.

But then it behoves you, O Wives, God expects it of you, to give your Husbands a helping hand. *Let woman, says St. PAUL, ‖ be subject to their husbands as to our Lord. Because the man is the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the Church.* Subjection then is your duty. But what kind of Subjection? Not a Subjection of meanness, servitude, or slavery: No; but a Subjection of love. Not a love dictated by wantonness, interest, or abject fear; but a love inspired by a holy fear of God, more than of your husbands; and supported by such a Chastity, Tenderness and unfeign'd sanctity of Manners, as may, by degrees, win over, to God and to yourselves the most reprobate of Husbands. *In such manner, says St. PETER, ** let women be subject to their husbands; that, if any believe not the word, by the conversation of the women, without the word, they may be won.*

In short, men and wives, to attain this desirable end of marriage, you should make it your joint perpetual struggle, as the Prince of the Apostles ad-

* Ephesians v. † Ibid. † Ephesians v. § Ibid. ‖ Ibid. ** 1. St. Peter iii.

“Your

wives you, * to be *all of one mind, having compassion for Each-other, lovers of fraternity, mercifull, modest, humble*: Not contending with One-another for the last word, *not rendering evil for evil, nor curse for curse: but contrariwise blessing*: For TO THIS END ARE YOU CALL'D THAT YOU MAY BY INHERITANCE POSSESS A BENEDICTION. It is to the want of this Christian conduct in married Catholics, we must impute it, that so very few conversions are made, of heretic husbands, by Catholic wives and the reverse. For whatever latent dispositions such unbelievers may have, what room is there to hope that they can ever be brought over to the pure Faith of Christ, when that Faith is brought into contempt, with them, by the professors of it? St. Paul indeed † tells us, that *the unbelieving man is sanctified by the faithful woman, and the unbelieving woman, by the faithful husband*. But this can only be understood where the faithful are so in practice as well as belief. For what encouragement to embrace Catholic Religion, can those married Heretics or Infidels have, from their Catholic comforts; who see them as faulty and irregular as themselves, abandon'd to the same intemperance, indevotion, love of strife and contradiction, as themselves; no more patient, pious, zealous nor sanctified, than themselves; if not often, perhaps, immersed in such vicious Indecencies as moral Pagans would scorn to copy.

You then, O dearly beloved Catholics, who actually are join'd in wedlock with heretics, know, that you are indispenably bound to labour for the conversion of your consorts by the piety of your example! And you, who are coupled with catholics, know you not, that you are to answer, Soul for Soul, for each-other? How greatly then must it not behove you to promote each-other's sanctification; that in the mutual salvation of one-another you may, each, secure your own! If either party of you closely followed the lessons of patience, meekness, charity, fidelity, and christian piety taught you by the Church; you could not fail of working upon the other, in time, and winning your partner in life to be your rival in good. And *who is it can hurt you, if you be emulators of Good?* says St. Peter. ‡ Once you enjoy a perfect Christian Harmony n yourselves, and know no other strife than which shall excell the other in the duties of your station; You can have nothing to fear in the other world, and no great evils to suffer in this. And tho' you should be harass'd with frequent sicknesses, losses, oppressions, hard usage, or any other external evils; they will only, like random darts, fall whizzing round you, without the force to reach your hearts, if these be but fortified with mutual love, and Christian Peace. Suffer you may in

* 1 St. Peter iii. † 1 Cor. vii.

‡ 1 St. Peter iii.

Body; but *it is better* as our Princely Apostle says, ** to suffer as doing well (if the will of God will have it so) than doing ill*: and why but because the sweet repose of conscience which attends the social love of married Christians, who walk in fear of God, is capable alone of lifting their souls above the miseries which their bodies feel.

II. Thus, wedded Christians, thus plainly have you yourselves the power in your hands to remedy, with the assistance of God's co-operating grace, the worst of evils you complain of in the marriage-state. Think not then to throw the blame on God, if your calamities encrease. Think not to screen your guilt, or palliate that uncleanness whence your miseries flow, by indolently crying out, with our leper, *Lord! if thou wilt, thou can'st make me clean*. No, no: "If you will not lay hold of my graces; *Your perdition is from yourselves*, says the Lord; "† be but as willing to be cured, as I am to cure "You; and the affair is done; your relief is your "own. *I will. Be thou*, every married person, *Be thou made clean*." It is even so, Christians; it is even as St. *Augustin* very wisely remarks, "That "gracious God who created us without us, who "redeem'd us without us, will not save us with- "out us." His grace indeed is ever at your call. Make use of it then to practice the means and pursue the ends which I have here pointed out to you, and you shall see all the miseries you complain of converted into blessings. You shall soon be convinced that the cause of them is in yourselves, and the cure greatly so too.

There are however many great and grievous obstacles, which must be first removed before you can attain to this exalted purpose. And these, to avoid being irksome, I shall defer the laying before you till next Sunday. In the mean time therefore, you who have hitherto fulfill'd the duties of this holy station, return your Maker thanks for giving you his grace to do so: Go on: Improve that grace; *emulate the better gifts*; † and try to carry your emulative progress to perfection. And if there be any couple here among you, who have hitherto fallen from the dignity of married Christians; make use of all the interim to rise again: Cry not supinely indolent, to God, *Lord! if thou wilt, thou can'st make me clean*. But co-operating with the graces offer'd you, be your own physicians and *be made clean*. Apply to the holy eucharist that source of graces for assistance to fulfill the duties you have hitherto neglected. Be reconciled: Forgive, and even study to forget each-other's past mistakes: Join hands and hearts with the same fervor, as if it was the morning of your nuptials; and for the

future

* *Ibid.*

† *Hosai* xiii.

‡ 1 Cor. xii.

ture let your souls look forward. In short from this day forth let all your contention be a noble, truly Christian struggle, which shall arrive the first at the perfection of conjugal fidelity, of mutual deference, tenderness and love. Such was the blessed union of *Isaac and Rebecca*, of *Jacob and Rachel*, of the holy *St Joseph* and his immaculate spouse. Such

is the harmony of Christ and his Church. Such then, O married Christians, let yours be: That of militant members of his Church upon earth, you may be made triumphant citizens in heaven, and be crown'd with immortal glory in each-other's society, while God is God. Which, *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

On the FOURTH SUNDAY after the EPIPHANY.

St. MATHEW viii. 24, 25, 26.

And Lo! A great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was cover'd with waves, but JESUS slept. And his disciples came to him, and raised him saying: Lord save us: We perish. And he say'th to them: Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then rising up he commanded the winds and the sea, and there ensued a great calm.

A Wide ocean indeed, Christians, is the world we are in, almost continually agitated with storms, and never free from perils even in the seemingly most settled calms: A dangerous sea, amidst the fluctuating vicissitudes of which, our hearts, like so many giddy cock-boats tost and re-tost this way and that, forever in motion, yet seldom or never advancing towards rest, are always overwhelm'd, or threaten'd to be so, with some raging waves of tribulation or other. Of all the tempests, however, which batter the miserable barks of human nature, there are none so severe, none so wrecking, none so black with horror, or so big with destruction, as the storms which arise from matrimonial disagreements. The unhappy pairs, who are overtaken by these, are very seldom able to ride through them in safety: And if there be, here and there, a christian couple, who, with long struggling, fortunately weather the fury of them; They almost never fail to bring with them into the harbour, all the distressful proofs of a miserable wreck. But ah! how much the major part piteously perishing in the hurricane, may cry out in the words of the PSALMIST: **I am stuck fast in the mire of the deep: And there is no standing. I am come into the depth of the sea, and a tempest has overwhelm'd me.* And

* Psalm lxxviii.

where is the wonder? The major part of married Christians, if they do (as it is to be hoped they do) carry JESUS with them in the sacramental graces they set out with, in embarking in wedlock; too generally do they lull him asleep to their succour, in time of need, by the little attention and regard they pay to him. And therefore, carrying with them the matter of their misery, well may they expect to be surprised by such storms as, widening them more and more from security, draw them nearer and nearer to the destruction they are big with. Alas poor heedless Mortals! How like are they not thus far to the disciples in this gospel, who, carrying with them in person JESUS, the pledge of all safety, nevertheless lull'd him asleep to their dangers, probably, by not keeping themselves sufficiently awake to the blessing of his divine Presence with them? And therefore, *Lo!* says our Evangelist, *a great tempest arose in the sea, so that the boat was cover'd with waves: But JESUS all the while slept.* So far indeed they-themselves were the authors of the terrors and troubles which overtook them. But: If their folly in this was great, their wisdom in repairing that folly was still much greater. If their indolent neglect of Christ's presence plunged them into distress; the industry, with which they afterwards roused him to their relief, rescued them again out of distress. *And the disciples came to him, says St. MATHEW, and raised him saying: Lord save us: we perish.* And what was the consequence? Why our Divine Lord, after rebuking them for their faithless indolence in disregarding his presence, *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little Faith?* To reward their industry in returning to him, *rising up he commanded the winds and the sea, and there ensued a great calm.* O Christians! married Christians!

L

ans! O! would you but be as earnest to imitate the Disciples in one part of their conduct, as, I fear, you have been, to imitate them in the other; would you but copy their industry in co-operating with the graces of Christ, as you have copied their indolence in the neglect of those graces; how soon would the matrimonial storms blow over, which now oppress you! How soon would there not ensue a great calm! For ah! Believe me: the miseries, you groan-under in marriage, are, in great measure, of your own seeking; and may be, by the help of grace, in your own power to remove. This is the sum of what I mean at present to convince you of, by laying before you, according to promise,

I. The main obstacles, which *Satan* endeavours to throw in your way to the desirable ends of marriage, mention'd in my former Sermon: Obstacles which merit all your study to remove, if you wish to be put in peaceful possession of the advantages of Wedlock. *And to make the reflection on these obstacles useful, I shall shew you, in the same point of view,*

II. The prudential means to surmount them.

"Thou, gracious God! Thou Pattern, Source, and Lover of all harmony! Assist me with persuasion: That what I utter, for thy honour and the good of this thy people, may not be lost in fruitless speculation; but, through the fertile operation of thy grace, infused into the hearts of all my hearers, be confirm'd by faithful practice."

I. There is no state or duty in life, which man can be engaged in, no calling so sacred, but that profest enemy of human nature, the devil, will make us pervert if he can. Yet is he a mere impotent snarler; who, let him bark ever so loudly at us, cannot bite us without our own consent; and has no power to prevail over us, but what we ourselves are foolishly pleased to compliment him with. Indeed sometimes, for a trial or purification of us, God does give him a degree of power to harass our bodies: But our lives and our souls he has placed beyond his reach, as long as we will but resolve to keep them so. When the fiend was soliciting the Almighty for the liberty to torment his faithful servant Job; Our Lord said to Satan, *Behold he is in thy hand,* do what thou wilt to his body, but yet save his life.* Lest the greatness of his Revelations should extol the Grand-Apostle of the Gentiles, he was partly deliver'd into the hands of the Prince of darkness: *There was given to me,* says he, † *An Angel of Satan, to buffet me.* And the three times he pray'd to his heavenly Lord to be

Job. Ch. ii.

† 2 Cor. xii.

deliver'd from this infernal Spirit, What comfort did he not receive? "*Paul!*" says the Lord, Be not afraid. It is not in the power of *Satan* to hurt thee, while my grace is in thee. For *my grace* † *sufficeth thee alone.*" In vain then may *Satan* snarl and bark, and shew his teeth: His utmost rage can never reach to hurt us, while we preserve the Grace of God unsullied in our hearts: That grace alone sufficeth us; and 'tis our fault, and no-one's fault but ours, if, by consenting to give up that grace, we put ourselves into his power. While we are happily possess'd of that, we may bid all the powers of Hell defiance: But from the instant that deserts us; the Devils reign begins: And 'tis no wonder, that, under his tyrannic sway, the very means of our Salvation should become the seal of our damnation. What richer source of graces has God bestow'd on man, than the most venerable Eucharist. Eleven out of twelve of Christ's Apostles found it so, in it's very institution: But then, they had not banish'd grace from their hearts in receiving it. *Judas* was the only one who did; and by so doing drew death eternal from the source of life: He eat the body of our Lord in a state of sin; and therefore *after the Morsel,* says the Evangelist, *Satan enter'd into him.* †

Matrimony, O Catholics, is, to you, a great and holy Sacrament, and consequently abounding in Grace. *This is a great Sacrament,* says St. PAUL, † *I say it in Christ and his Church.* If then you take care to receive this holy Sacrament in a state of Grace, and make use of the special graces of this, to persevere in the state you embrace for life by receiving it; what evils can befall you in that state, which the divine Grace is not sufficient to enable you to conquer or bear? *My grace sufficeth you,* says the Lord; and this he says, not to St. Paul alone, but to every-one of you. Yes, Beloved, the Grace of God is sufficient to make you proof against all the evils which *Satan* can brew to disturb your nuptial joys, and sufficient to lift you to the most desirable ends of marriage. See You not then, Christians, that the first grand obstacle you have to remove, in order to attain to the perfection of Christian happiness in wedlock, is a state of mortal sin? For what assistance or advantages can you ever hope to reap from the graces of matrimony, to enable you to conquer or endure the difficulties of the marriage-state, or to answer the exalted ends of it; if you wilfully renounce those graces, by continuing in sin and under the subjection of *Satan*: Whose sole view, in tyrannizing over you, is, to pervert the greatest mercies of God, to you, into your everlasting ruin? And while you are in a State of mortal sin, his power over you is absolute; for want of the Divine Grace in you, which alone can enable

† *Ibid.*

† St. John xiii.

‡ Ephesians v.

you

you to resist him. What then, O Christians, have such of you, as are about entering into the Marriage-State, to do, but to recur to the assistance of God, to rise from a State of mortal sin, if you are in it, by means of the holy Sacraments of Confession and Communion? O! of what infinit service might not a general Confession prove on such an occasion! What lights might it not afford the parties engaging, towards the perfect knowledge of themselves and their future christian conduct in life! What happiness temporal and eternal, what graces and blessings, might it not lay a foundation for! But, many of you are long since engaged in Wedlock; and therefore you'll say, this advice is too late for you. No, Beloved, it is not too late. If any of you unhappily are in a state of mortal sin, there is still time for confession and repentance; if you will but seize the time e'er it slips. There is still time to repair all your former mistakes in wedlock; if you will but lay hold on the grace which God offers you. But then have a care of delays; have a care of rejecting or putting off the inspiration, which Heaven this minute sends you; lest it should never send you another, but leave you forever in the power of Satan, and give you up to all the disorders the fiend may lead you into. However, if happily this impediment has not yet stood in your way; there are still many others which tend to it and must be removed; if You mean not to fall into the clutches of this subtil enemy, one time or other, by deviating from the great ends of your holy Station. *Hear then and I will shew, who are they over whom the Devil can prevail.* * What I have already said renders it needless to tell You, that they are all such as the fiend can persuade to part with grace. This then supposed, let us descend to particulars. Grace and every other virtue, especially in a Marriage-State must be essentially supported by these four noble habits, *Prudence, Justice, Fortitude, and Temperance*; and therefore, whatever married persons commit any essential breach of these, they immediately sink into a slavish subjection to Satan; in-as-much-as, by wholly parting with one of these, they exclude God from their hearts and minds, and fall the miserable dupes of their lawless passions. *They, says our Angelic Tutor, who so receive Matrimony that they exclude God from themselves and from their mind, and so give-up themselves to their lust, as horse and mule which have no understanding, over them the devil hath power.* †

I need not inform you, Beloved, what habits are these I am speaking of. They are well known to you by the name of *Cardinal Virtues*: So call'd because, once our souls are sanctified by grace and the gifts of *Faith, Hope, and Charity*, these are as they were, the hinges and main springs of motion

* *Tobiab vi.*

† *Ibid.*

to every other virtue peculiar to our several stations. A door well hung on its hinges moves regular and easy; which, once off the hooks, loses the uses of a door: and the virtues of a Christian are properly such, when equally poised and influenced by *Prudence, Justice, Fortitude and Temperance*; but degenerate into vices, if the ballance be destroy'd by the want of any one of these.

One of the first obstacles to nuptial happiness then is the vice opposit to the first of these *Cardinal Virtues*. You will easily guess that I mean, *Indiscretion*. But there are many indiscretions which married people are too often apt to run-into, and by which they too often obstruct the purposes they ought to pursue in Wedlock; for want of considering, that, tho' every indiscretion is not in itself a crime, yet most indiscretions, if not stopt in their progress, may end in criminal consequences. Gross familiarity between man and wife is not of itself an absolute crime: Yet how many crimes is it not too often the fatal parent of? What is it which first creates a mutual liking in two single persons; what is it cherishes that liking into love, and kindles love at length into the desire of possessing each-other for life; but a certain tenderness of condescendency, a decency of carriage towards one-another, actuated by such a respectful fear of offending, free from affectation, as love alone can be the parent and child of? Surely then the same principles which produced love before marriage, cannot but be the most prudential means of supporting, and augmenting it in marriage? It cannot then but be a very dangerous indiscretion in married persons to give into too familiar a treatment, one of the other, as they too often do: In fact, nothing more common. No sooner is their marriage consummated, than they throw aside all restraint: This throws them off the guard, which decency requires them always to be upon; and by so doing, sets all their foibles in such full glare as seldom fails, by little and little, to diminish the respectful esteem they conceived for each-other, before they were so well acquainted. Whereas would they but keep up, after marriage, that easy good-breeding, that modest respect, and tender complaisance for each-other, which they found it so easy to preserve in courtship; and would do so with the same Christian motive they did it with then, or ought to have done it; how uninterrupted a harmony might they not enjoy for life!

I must know very little of human life, could I be absurd enough to mean by this, that man and wife are to keep each-other at any ceremonial distance, by insipid affectations of formality or stiffness. That would be putting married folks to the cruel dilemma of a man at sea reduced to leap from the fire into the flood. But surely there is a medium between folly and frenzy; between the stupidity of

an affected stiffness, and the levity of a boundless familiarity. It is hard to say, which of these is most dangerous: The one is apt to beget dislike, the other indifference; and both tend to the same unhappy consequences in the end, which are contention, hatred and their mischievous attendants. Both then are vicious extremes and therefore to be avoided; otherwise you run the risk, married Christians, of being number'd with those who *exclude God from themselves*. And *over them*, says the Angel, *the Devil hath power*.

Make use then, of *Prudence*, Beloved, to lay hold on the happy medium of familiarity free from disrespect, of complaisance divested of affectation or disguise to each-other. Married persons should be perfectly free and familiar; nay strictly intimate. But then that freedom, that familiarity, that intimacy must flow from a compleat union of souls cemented by the highest esteem for each-other. And if you are thus united, as all married Christians are, or should be; your union will naturally dictate to you a mutual condescendency and tenderness; and will make each cautious of doing or saying any thing which may beget the least distaste or uneasiness in the other. Away then with those indiscreet meannesses of consulting (either) your own ease at the expence of the other; of insisting upon trifles with one-another; of contending for the last word with one-another. You are made for mutual help-mates to each-other, not for instruments of pain. Whether a table be set at the right or wrong end of the room; whether your dinner be ready at one or at two; whether in short the winged creature, which hovers in the air be a thrush or a black-bird, where is the mighty matter? And yet disputes of no greater importance have but too often set man and wife at variance; and usher'd-in such criminal contentions as have ended in nothing less than the total ruin of themselves and their family. But can such pitiful trifles be of importance enough to destroy the solidity of conjugal happiness? Can rational Creatures and Christians think it consistent with their dignity or interest, temporal or eternal, meanly to turn their backs upon the invaluable blessings of peace to run in pursuit of the shadow of a shadow? If, jointly engaged in an argument, you cannot agree upon a conclusion: your mutual struggle should be, which should first give it up. If the subject be a trifle; it is not worth your contending for; and, by giving up a trifle, You may gain your point another time in matters of greater consequence. Or if that itself be of consequence; nuptial harmony is of still greater weight, and therefore to be prefer'd. If truth or reason seems to lean on the other side, it is rashness in you to hold-out against it. Nay tho' you chance to have reason on your side; it is still wise to comply with the weak-

ness of your consort. There is a way, which prudence will teach, of giving up reason without contradicting truth. For tho' truth never must be contradicted; yet decency may sometimes require patiently to part-with a favourite truth, by silence, where the honour of God is not concern'd in our contending for it. A complaisance of this nature may win your partner to pay a greater deference to your judgment, when he or she comes to reflect. And this you are sure of, that your compliance will root you the deeper in his or her heart, tho' the opinion you give up should be deem'd a weakness of head. It is better then to appear a fool, than be one: The height of wisdom consists in knowing, when to give up reason by it's own consent: But it is the depth of folly to offend against the rules of reason by contending for it too long. *See'st thou a man*, says the wisest of Men, ** see'st thou a Man, who is hasty to speak? Folly is more to be expected than his Amendment*. It is then, Christians, your absolute interest to have perpetual recourse to *Prudence* to avoid every indiscretion, which may in the least obstruct your way to the desirable ends of marriage, by introducing such criminal consequences as shall exclude God from your hearts. *For they*, says the Angel, *who so receive matrimony that they exclude God from themselves, over them the Devil hath power*.

Prudence however will never preside where *Justice* is excluded. You are both then essentially bound to reciprocal justice in all the demands you may lawfully have, either on the other. *Let the Husband*, says St. PAUL, *render his debt to his wife: and the wife also in like manner to her Husband*. † The debt, which St. Paul here speaks of, cannot be refused by either, without a sin; *except*, as the Apostle says, *by consent for a time*, † and then only to attend the more closely to prayer, and to approach with greater purity to the holy Sacraments. And the reason the Apostle gives for it is, that neither may lay a snare in the other's way, by giving *Satan* room to tempt you to incontinency. It cannot then but be highly injurious to the opposit party, and consequently offensive to God, for either to defraud the other, from any motive of indifference, personal pique, or the criminal fear of having children. Children have ever been declared by God one of the chief blessings of a marriage-state: And St. Peter ranks them among the chief means of salvation to married persons. *For to this end are You call'd that, BY INHERITANCE, you may possess a benediction*. § But if continence in marriage becomes criminal when actuated by such motives, how much more heinous must it not be for any positive indecencies to be committed, by either or both

* Prov. xxix.
§ 1 S. Peter iii.

† 1 Cor. vii.

‡ Ibid.

parties to obstruct this wise, great and holy end of wedlock! Yet, who am I talking to? Not to infidels and reprobates, but to Catholics; and, I hope, good-ones. Why then should I even hint at enormities, which very atheists would blush to approve of? Let me then leave this ungrateful subject, more proper for the province of a secret director, than of a public preacher, to come to some of the other injustices, by which mistaken Christians are too apt to exclude God from themselves in marriage, and in so doing to give the devil a power over them.

It was formerly a received opinion among the *Pagan* philosophers, that matrimony was a hindrance to the progress of learning and wisdom: But how groundless this opinion was, sufficiently appears by their Almighty author's joining man and wife and giving them for help-mates to each-other. The author of all wisdom thought it not good for man to be alone; *Let us therefore, says he, make to him a help-mate like to himself.** And that they might be effectually such to each-other, he appointed them their different provinces of action, by allotting, to the man, the labour and care to provide for the support of his family with industry abroad; and confining the woman to in-door sollicitude. To labour abroad, says *St. John Chrysologus*, "is the proper vocation of the men, as that of their wives is the confinement of domestic affairs." A husband then cottishly prying into the province of his wife, cannot but be as preposterous a Figure, as a woman would make transacting the business of his traffic upon the exchange. And tho' the former be a more common sight than the latter; it cannot be less odious to the party insulted by it, for being familiar. Where such meannesses then are practiced, on either side, where either forget their separate functions, to break-in upon the province of the other; what can be expected to follow, but first disgust, then broils, then dislikes, and finally hatred with all the frightful train of discord attending it?

You, I know, will be mightily pleased, O Wives, to hear, that your Husbands are to provide for your support. But ought you not to be equally pleased with the duty of providing for their ease? If it is an insult they do you, to pry into your domestic office; is it not an injustice in you so to neglect that office, as to make it necessary for them to add that additional trouble to their other fatigues? While they are toiling abroad for your support, is it not a debt of justice you owe them, to toil at home for their refreshment and solace against they return to you? To what do all their labours tend, but to maintain you and your Children in affluence? If then you should foolishly labour to reduce them to beggary, by squandering the fruits of their labour, in

apparel unbecoming your station or circumstance, or in any other extravagant impertinences to trick-up yourselves or otherwise gratify your Pride and Folly; can you be honest to them, or be possessors of any love for them? Do you know what aching of Head and Heart, what weariness of limbs they endure, to acquire the substance they bring home to secure you from want and uneasiness? What then can be a more cruel crying injustice, than for you to hazard reducing them to both, by rioting with the sweat of their brow, or suffering their effects to diminish, through your slothful want of care and oeconomy? If they allow'd you not necessities and conveniences; if they exposed you to meannesses disreputable to you and themselves, by keeping you bare of money, when able to afford it you; you might and ought to use every opportunity to make a prudent reserve, to save their reputation and your own. But where they allow you reasonable conveniences, where they live in common with you, and give you free access to their purse as well as their heart, and they cannot well do the one without the other; where this is the case, *I say*, it is downright Barbarity as well as *Injustice* and *Intemperance* in you, to run into any expences which tend not to the mutual advantage of both: And every private Purse is, in such case, a private Robbery. It is true, his substance is rigorously yours; but surely he has a right to share in it. If then he thinks not much of acquiring that substance for you; You cannot, without injustice, think much of managing and preserving that substance, for him to share in it with you. If he grudges not to bear the heat of the day to bring you home a sustenance; how cruel would it not be in you, to grudge some pains to prepare a comfortable reception for him against he comes home to you? Can it be right, think you, for you to leave your affairs at sixes and sevens, to spend one half of the day in the idle business of dress, the other half in more idle visits, and leave your husbands to the solitary comfort of returning from labour and care to the grating disgusts of a disorderly house? On the contrary, ought you not rather to employ the chief part of your day in taking care to prepare, for his coming, a clean warm and comfortable home; that in your reception he may find a relief from labour, in your tenderness a respite from Weariness and Pain, and in your love an asylum from care and vexation? This, O married Females, is an absolute duty; every deficiency in which is a material obstacle you must remove; if you mean to enjoy happiness in wedlock, for any solid duration.

When I talk of the idle business of dress, I cannot be supposed to condemn your observing a neatness and comeliness of attire, such as may render you graceful and captivating in the Eyes of your consorts? for whom alone you should assume all

your

your graces. This is a part of prudence becoming the most virtuous women, who, considering the natural fickleness, depravedness and love of novelty in the opposite sex, ought to make use of every innocent art to secure a husband's virtue, by appearing with new graces before him, as much as possible. This even the Apostle not only recommends but enjoins, * directing Women to appear in comely attire, with modesty and sobriety adorning themselves. The Prince of Apostles is of the same mind; adding, for example to posterity, the Instance of Sarah, who, with other holy women of the Old Law, who trusted in God, so sometimes adorn'd themselves, says he, *subject to their own husbands.* † It was then to make themselves agreeable to their husbands, that they spent some time in adorning themselves; not, like some of our modern Wives, to please every one else but them. They deck'd themselves as well as these, yet not in plaited hair, or gold, or precious stones, or gorgeous Apparel, ‡ like these; but as St. Paul advises, in *That which becometh women professing piety by good Works.* § There is then a wide difference between neatness and gracefulness of dress, and the vanity and fooleries of it. Perhaps, one of the grand obstacles, of all, to the continuation of happiness in marriage is that grand mistake which but too many Women run into, who, never dirty before marriage, are seldom or never compleatly neat in it. Or, if they sometimes are a little decent; it is only when their husbands are from home, or somebody of less importance to their happiness than their husband is by. Hence often proceeds the growing indifference, which, with bleeding hearts, they frequently discover in a Consort, without being able to account for the cause, for want of reflecting that their mistaken neglect is the canker-worm of that esteem which their neatness gave birth to in his breast. Yet surely there is a medium between such extravagant negligence, and making the business of dress and gaiety the whole employment of life. There is surely a prudent mean between not dressing at all to please your husbands, and spending your whole time to the disadvantage of them and your family, merely to glut vanity with universal admiration.

But where am I lost? I forgot I am talking to women of virtue, women of sense, Christian women, who know how to keep the decorums of graceful decency, without prejudice to their more amiable ornaments of modesty and piety. But is there no fear, lest your indiscretion should render your very piety a snare to you. If you do not waste your time in dress; do you never neglect the duties of your family, for the lazy occupation of ill-timed Prayer. Prayer is an excellent employ in

its proper times; but it has it's times: And there are other duties for you, of greater importance than being always on your knees. To hear Prayers on Days of Obligation, is an essential duty: And to hear them every day, if leisure will permit, is a grateful devotion to God. But to spend the whole morning at church and leave your house in confusion, can it be true devotion? No: 'tis downright illusion. *Let women be subject to their husbands as to our Lord.* * Once then your devotions of precept are satisfied, you are to leave all other prayers and devotions, which interrupt the necessary management of your family, and subjection to your husbands. In pleasing them for God's sake, you honour our Lord. There is no Fortitude in provoking them to disgrace and degrade themselves, by ill-treating you and offending God, merely that you may attend to unseasonable Prayer. The Fortitude required of your Sex in wedlock, is not the making your husbands morose, by neglecting their family or thwarting their Will, on purpose to bear with them. It consists not in provoking, but in bearing with unprovoked ill-usage; in sharing with them in the labours of life, in the industrious management of their family, in the tender care of themselves, and in the unwearied study to promote your mutual peace and happiness. The woman of true Fortitude in marriage is such a valiant, prudent, just and temperate wife, as is described by the inspired Author of the Proverbs. † It is she, in a word, who, among many excellent qualities, is especially remarkable for rendering Good and not Evil all the days of her life. *She hath sought wool and flax; and hath wrought by the counsel of her hands: She hath consider'd the paths of her house; and hath not eat her bread in idleness.* In short, to sum up her praise in few words; *Strength and beauty is her garment and she shall laugh in the latter day.* Such then, married women, make it your study to become. For these are the sure and only means to attain to the honours and advantages of the Marriage-State.

You, O Husbands, I presume, are attentive enough to all this: It is needless for me to advise you to remind your wives of these duties now and then. You yourselves will be ready enough, to twit them, when you think there is occasion, with what the Preacher has told them. Yet if you will dare trust to a friendly advice; before you do this, take care, They have nothing to reproach you with. If you think it an injustice for your wives to squander, on trifles, that substance which you ought to share with them, is it not full as gross an injustice in you to lavish that substance in drinking and other idle pleasures, if not vicious ones? You will tell me, perhaps, that you are the Lords and

* 1 Tim. ii. † 1 S. Peter iii. ‡ 1 Tim. ii.
§ 1 Tim. iii. § 1 Tim. ii.

* Ephesians v.

† Prov. xxxi

Masters;

Masters; and therefore have a greater right to them. Alas, my Lords, *If I must call you so!* You forget surely, how solemnly you swore to your wives, in marriage, to endow them with all your worldly goods. From that minute then they became theirs; and therefore every considerable waste of those goods, every considerable alienation of them from them, is, not only robbery, but perjury, perfidy and a kind of sacrilege. What then shall we say of those insects without a name, who, not content with lavishing the substance their wives have brought them, are mean enough to live by the labour of These? Insects I call them: For surely, had they but one single drop of the blood of a Man mix'd with the lazy puddle in their corrupted veins; they would generously scorn to be maintain'd by Women, while they had limbs to labour for the support of their wives and themselves. Surely they would blush at the Stinging Ridicule of a SOVEREIGN LORD, in health and vigour, kept from Starving by the Sweat of a *Woman-Vassal's* brow.

But whither am I running? You, O Catholic Husbands! You, I hope, are none of you capable of the meanness of living on the substance of your wives, or alienating from them your own. Yet what are they the better for all your oeconomy? If you are niggardly enough to reduce them, like servants or children, to the necessity of asking you for every shilling they want; it would be as well for them, that you had no oeconomy, nor even substance. Must your wives come cringing to you, whenever they want this necessary trifle or that? Pretty mothers you have chosen for your children, if they cannot govern a shilling? Pretty wives to intrust your lives with, who may not be trusted with your purse? Or, if they are worthy of your confidence in those matters of higher importance; what an unpardonable indignity is it not, to treat them with such diffidence and ungenerous coolness in this! But do you know what you are doing? You are acting the devil's part by them, and plying them with temptations to such practices, as perhaps, if they were not exasperated, their souls would abhor. There are few women but have some trifling secret vanities to gratify, which, for you, are better to be indulged than obstructed; tho' they cannot be indulged without some matter of money. And every woman, who has not the virtue to bear with a want of this sort, will have art enough to supply her wants from one quarter, if she cannot from another. 'Tis your own interest therefore to put her above the necessity of seeking elsewhere, at your greater cost, what she has to expect at a lesser. Away then for shame, Christians, with such littlenesses of soul: unjustifiable among Christians, insupportable to your comforts, and never advantageous to yourselves. Re-

member, that, as you ought to have but one soul, so ought you to have but one purse and one interest. You, O men, have, by solemn vow, endow'd your wives with all your worldly goods; and therefore ought you to make them equal sharers in your pleasures as well as pains, and to banish for ever those chilling words, as St. Gregory calls them, *mine and thine*. For this detestable distinction in marriage is one of the great obstacles to the glorious ends to be pursued in it.

If you must be sovereigns; assert your sovereignty by exerting the superiority of sense, which you pay yourselves the compliment of claiming, not a superiority of lungs or animal strength. I am ready to subscribe to your title of Lords and Masters; if you can but resolve to make this modest concession, that your wives are mistresses. I find no where, that they were intended your slaves. God gave them to you for help-mates: And if he took not the woman from the head of the man, on purpose that she might not controul but obey him; Neither did he take her from his feet but from his ribs, that she might not be trampled upon, or treated with a subjection of servitude, but be cherish'd in his heart as his equal, and subject to him only by the love his tenderness creates.

Your treatment of your wives then, O husbands, if you mean to act not only as Christians, but even as men, ought to be amicable and tender as becomes bosom-friends, not favouring of injurious tyranny. *Be not,* says the inspired son of SYRACH, ** as a lion in thy house, overthrowing them of thy household, and oppressing them who are subject to thee.* Away then with all passionate behaviour to them. Fury may be a perfection in a lion; but it is meanness for soul in a man. Away with all opprobrious language; which well-bred porters would hesitate to utter. *Love your wives,* says St. PAUL, *and be not bitter towards them.* † But dwell with them, as St. Peter directs you, *according to Knowledge.* † Remember, if you are to give laws to them, it is not to be as despotic sovereigns to your vassals, but as the soul to the body, tied by a sameness of affections and link'd by inseparable interests. If they have their faults; you have yours: And generally more numerous and grievous ones. You expect them to bear with yours: It is but just then, that you should exert your prudence, your fortitude and your temperance of heat, to bear with theirs: And they are seldom more than feminine foibles. Learn then to compassionate their weaknesses, to the weaker feminine vessels imparting honour. In this shew your superior strength and command: In this place all your pride; mindful, that they are coheirs with you to the Grace of life. Without doing this, you can

* Ecclesiasticus iv. † Colossians iii.
† 1 S. i. cetera.

never be qualified for praying to God: For your prayers are obstructed by the exclusion of God from your minds and hearts. *And they who so receive matrimony, says the Angel, that they exclude God from themselves and their mind, over them the devil hath power.*

Romulus the first founder of *Rome*, tho' a Pagan, tho' stain'd with the blood of his own brother, was not so divested of all humanity as not to see the greater horror of a man's ill-treating his wife, and therefore laid this down as a law: "Every woman, *says he*, lawfully join'd in wedlock with a man, is the partner of his fortunes and even of his religious rites. And as he is the Lord of his house, she is the lady of it." The laws of nature have made all things common to both; and therefore, the woman can receive no injury but what must affect the husband. And justice then requires, O husbands, that instead of injuring and oppressing them yourselves, you should guard them from every injury and violence; them whom you received at the altar; them, whom you have taken from their native home; from their every friend, and from every other means of succour, to supply the place of all and to be yourselves their only refuge, comfort, support and defence. This you promised in marriage; and for this, did they consent to leave father and mother, and all, which before was near and dear to them, to cleave to you. It was this consideration doubtless which moved *Aristotle* to treat as barbarians, all those who put their wives upon a level with servants. How then must we regard him, who shall take a servant's part against a wife; and even encourage his children or domestics to fly in the face of their mother or mistress?

It is easy to gather hence, what contempt is due to those wretches, who are mean and base enough to lift up their hands against a wife. Justice there can be none in such proceedings. For a wife is no bond-slave but an equal; and no laws ever allow'd one equal to oppress another with blows. The faulty are more often exasperated than mended by stripes: There can then be no *Prudence* neither, in insulting a wife with them. And *Fortitude* is quite out of the case. There is no laurel or fame, assign'd to woman-fighters that ever I could hear or read of. For a woman to strike her husband, it requires a good deal of courage; and therefore a false bravery may tempt them to it: Whereas nothing but the utmost cowardice of soul can influence a man to strike a woman for the greatest of injuries. And therefore is it, that, tho' the laws have been often very severe against women who presume to strike a husband, yet there never was hitherto a legislator, who thought it necessary to offer such an indignity to man as to restrain him, by laws from what his very manhood alone ought to make him disdain.

But who am I talking to? To Savages? No: there are savages who have too much of the rational being in them to exert their brutal strength against a creature too weak by Nature for an equal resistance? Am I talking to Infidels, *I say*? No: And if I was: moral heathens in general scorn such unnatural meannesses. *Cato*, tho' no friend to the women, as is well known, is absolutely against the baseness of a man's striking his wife; and insists, that "They who act thus are no less guilty of sacrilege than they who defile the Sanctuary of God." It is time enough then, to enveigh against such enormous conduct, when the Brutes can understand me. But why the Brutes? They deserve no reproaches of this sort. Bare instinct lifts them above these crimes against Nature. Man, Man alone, the meanest of brutes when he deserts reason and grace, is the only male creature who thus abuses his female companion. Thank God, I am talking to Christians then, who may not, without injury to their high character, be so much as suspected capable of such irregularities; and therefore I shall leave the wretches, who are capable of them, to themselves; too abandoned to be benefited by the word of God, too perverse for remonstrance, too far lost to the Grace of God to be shamed out of vice, and too strongly held by the power they give *Satan* over them, for me to hope to reclaim.

And yet, Beloved Christians, free as I hope you are from these grosser abuses of conjugal peace; free as you may be at present from any matrimonial storms but what you can weather; have a care of being too venturous: Beware how you make familiar with danger. At sea every the faintest gale may be big with a ruinous tempest: And in matrimony every the most trifling quarrel, may bring forth such a storm as shall overwhelm you. It is a common maxim, but a very much mistaken One because very little understood, that "the falling out of friends is the renewal of love." And it is hence, I believe, that the weaker vainer part of the sex often purposely seek feuds, for the sake of those sweets which they falsely promise themselves in reconciliation. Because, perhaps, the ground they lost in some prior disputes they found means to regain with interest, when the breach was made up. But this is a dangerous commerce, by which there is more lost, in the long run, than there is gain'd, to the adventurers. It is possible and even probable, that a light breach of matrimonial peace, for once and away, may, when made up, be attended with a sensible improvement of conjugal love in a husband, especially if, upon cool reflection, he finds himself to have been in the wrong; And the same may be said on the woman's side. And there is good reason for it. Because the uneasiness which both parties must have endured, in the interval of disagreement, cannot but heighten by comparison the happiness

piacels of their re-union. But then is a very precarious effect of conjugal contentions: And so seldom experienced, especially where those contentions become frequent, that it can by no means be wise in either party to depend upon them. Every misunderstanding between man and wife, however short, however trivial, impairs, and contributes in some degree to the blunting of, that tenderness which married persons ought to have for each other: And may if frequently re-iterated wear it quite away. A ship, at sea, may ride-out many little storms, without any sensible marks of important detriment from any one of them. Nevertheless shall the sides of it be so weaken'd and worn by the frequency of them, as, at length, to perish almost in a calm. Thus too, tho' every single storm of discord between man and wife may be trivial in itself; yet does it frequently happen, that a multiplicity of those trifling disagreements totally overset the matrimonial bark. Nay in reality, it is from the merest trifles, generally speaking, that the greatest storms of strife arise in wedlock. I am not apprehensive, Christians, that any of you will suddenly give into the grossest abuses of your marriage. No, my greatest fear is, lest, by neglecting trifles, you should come to mistakes of greater consequence. When married persons disagree; it is for the most part, at first, about mere trifles. When they lessen themselves in the eyes of one-another, it is, at first, by mere trifles. When they renounce the solid blessings of conjugal harmony, fidelity and love; it is almost always for the merest trifles, magnified, by passion and prejudice, into mighty matters. What St. Bernard says of the world in general is so very applicable in particular to the wedded world, that, straiten'd as we begin to be for time, I cannot withstand the giving you his own words. "Cast but an eye upon a person drowning in a deep water, *says he*, and how eagerly shall you not see him grasp the first person or thing which he lays his hand on. Nothing can make him quit his hold of whatever comes first in his reach; though a thing which can be of no use but to render his ruin inevitable, such as the very weeds which entangle him or the stone which weighs him under water. Nay, too often does it happen, that, if any persons come to his relief, so fast does he cling to them, as to involve them in his own distress, and render it oftentimes impracticable for them to save him or themselves. So too, in this great and spacious sea of human life, they, who are overwhelm'd with the tempest of matrimonial strife, too often miserably perish, through their own folly, in madly pursuing precarious perishable paltry trifles and neglecting those solid blessings of conjugal virtue, which would they but lay fast hold of them, might, not only rescue

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" them from temporal anguish, but secure them " everlasting peace and joy. Thus, I say, do they " miserably perish, who, neglecting the study of " true and saving happiness, run in search of earth- " ly fickle fleeting pleasure, with such senseless eagerness that there is no recalling or disentangling them." Atleast is there often danger, by running to their succour, of being involved in their wretchedness.

Beware then, married Christians: Beware, each of you, of what you call trifles. Believe me, they may prove no trifles for you. Trifles as you esteem your little indiscretions in matrimony, they may lull the grace of JESUS asleep in your breast or in that of your partner, if not in both; and raise such a storm of strife and misery as may totally overwhelm you. Have any of you already had the fatal experience of it? Are you overwhelm'd with the waves of affliction, while JESUS seems asleep to your relief? Ah! look then into your own souls for the cause, to remove it. Has not your past or present neglect of the sacramental graces of matrimony incensed him to shut his healing eyes to your anguish? Arise then with redoubled fervour and have recourse again to JESUS for fresh graces. Exert yourselves in the improvement of them. In short let your future assiduity rouse him to your assistance, that, *commanding the winds of dissention and the waves of distress which overpower you, there may ensue a great calm*: A perfect serenity in your minds and a solid tranquillity in your consciences.

To conclude, O married Christians, you who have deserted Christ and provok'd him to withdraw his comforts his graces his blessings from you: Recall his mercies, by removing the obstacles of your own putting. And you, who live more regular lives! You, who fulfill the essential duties of your wedlock! Guard yourselves from losing sight of the great ends of it by trifles. Let nothing tempt you to break your mutual harmony. Married Christians! Be christianly fond of each-other, and study to improve your mutual love and esteem. But then, carry not your fondness beyond the bounds of discretion: Let not your love, like that of *horse and mule who have no understanding*, degenerate into lust; Nor let mere carnal delight have the chief part in your motives of conjugal love towards one-another. Remember the fate of the *first seven husbands of Sarah the daughter of Raguel*: Every-one of whom GOD permitted the devil to carry away; Because *one married her for the greatness of her fortune; another for her beauty, and others for like vicious motives*. In short *they all received matrimony (as the angel tells Tobias) * so as to exclude God from themselves and their mind. And so gave themselves to lust, as horse and mule who have no understand-*

* Chap. vi.

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ing. And therefore over them the devil had power. Not so over Tobiah. He married the same woman yet a virgin, and enjoy'd her with all the happinesses of wedlock; because his motives and conduct were holy. The first night of their marriage, entering into her chamber, he address'd himself thus to his virgin wife. * *Sarah, arise: And let us pray to God, to-day and to-morrow, and the next morrow: Because these three nights we are join'd to God. For we are the children of holy men, and may not be join'd as Gentils who know not God.*

Follow then, O Christians, this glorious example! * Chap. viii.

ple. Give some truce to your mutual fondnesses at times, to add a blessing to them by the increase of your devotion to God. Remember, that, if you are not saints yourselves, you are children of saints; and therefore ought not to live like married infidels. No: Be temperate in your pleasures; be prudent, just, and full of fortitude, in sharing your pleasures with one-another, in bearing the foibles of each-other, and in forwarding each-other's temporal and eternal happiness: That following the example of your pious ancestors upon earth, you may share, with them, in their rewards in heaven. Which I beseech God: *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

On the FIFTH SUNDAY after the EPIPHANY.

St. MATHEW xiii. 30.

Suffer both to grow till the harvest, and, in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers: gather up first the cockle, and bind it in bundles to burn; but the wheat gather ye into my barn.

THE Gospel for this day, Christians, contains some of the most important truths our Saviour communicated to his disciples. This divinely gracious lawgiver, to conform himself to the cast of mind peculiar to the Jews and Gentils of the East, in his days, deliver'd to them, many of his sublimest doctrines, in such familiar parables as might best square with their groveling understandings; that they might have no excuse, no room to plead ignorance for their rejecting them. And on the other side, for the benefit of us, who are unaccustom'd to, and therefore less acquainted with, the emblematic method of conversing, he graciously condescends to explain to us such of them as bear any the least appearance of perplexity. The meaning therefore of the present parable he declares to his disciples to be this: *He, who soweth the good seed, is the Son of man: The field is the world. The cockle are the children of the wicked one. The enemy, who sow'd them, is the Devil. But the Harvest is the end of the world: And the Reapers are the Angels.* In the Good Seed and the pernicious cockle then we are taught, by Christ himself, to understand the Election of the Just and the Reprobation of the Wicked: The unwieldy heaps of

these, like sapless faggots, thrown into the unquenchable flames of hell; and the inestimable measure of those, like a rich harvest of solid corn, collected into the granaries of heaven. The Church, like a fair and fertile field, is constantly yielding to the Almighty, a precious crop of virtuous souls, rich in the fruits of grace and every good. These, these are the blessed product of that Good Seed, which the Son of God and Son of Man, our Redeemer Christ, has graciously sown in it with his precious death. And these are the growing saints whom *David* compares to the plant by the waterside, which shall yield it's fruit in due season, whose foliage shall never decay, and whose every motion shall be crown'd with success. Alas, what a pity it is, that such a fruitful soil should be profanely intersown with cockle, with briars, with tares and usefess, nay pernicious, weeds! Yet so it is. Spite of all the vigilance of the Church and the industry of the major part of her Ministers, the infernal Enemy, ever intent on mischief, has taken advantage of the drowsiness and indolence of some of her members to sow the pernicious cockle of sin, error and scandal amidst the solid grain. And to such a height is it grown, that there is no clearing the Church of this stubble of perdition, without prejudice to the blessed crop of innocence, who are destin'd for the eternal granaries of glory, till the day of universal harvest. Then, then shall the Son of Man, says Christ, send his angels; and they shall gather, out of his kingdom, all scandals and shall

them who work iniquity; and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Ah wretched Sinners! Stubble of destruction! Cockle of Satan and fuel of a never-ceasing fire! Say, whoever you are: What will your dreadful situation be in that day of harvest? What will it avail you, to have mix'd with the Righteous, undisturb'd in the spacious field of God's Church, when, at last, you must be separated from them forever. For even as the cockle is gather'd up and burnt with fire: so shall it be in the end of the world with you; unless you take timely warning and suffer yourselves to ripen into fruits worthy of repentance. Then indeed may you share the happy portion of the Just, who shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Yes: You, O happy souls, whose Will is that of your Lord, whose lives are fruitful in virtue, and whose study is, to yield the fruits of innocence or repentance! You, says God, by the mouth of his prophet ISAIAH, * *You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace: The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.*

The consequence then of all this is big with Three important Truths. The First is, that God is not Author of Any of the moral evils, which infect the fertile field of his Church; he having sown nothing in it but Good seed. The second is, that God has ineffable reasons for suffering the evils he does not produce; otherwise they could not subsist. And the third is, that God's permissive Providence does not hinder the wicked from shunning Evil and doing Good; otherwise they could not justly be punish'd. Hence therefore I shall take occasion to instruct you in Three fundamental points of Christian Faith; by shewing you,

- I. That, whatever reasons the Almighty may have for suffering the Wicked to intermix with the Good in his Church, his Will is nevertheless that there be none but Good.
- II. That probable reasons may be assign'd for his divine toleration of this mixture of the Bad with the Good: and
- III. That it absolutely depends upon every Christian to be of the Number of the Good and Elect, if he so pleases.

Lastly, To make these Reflections useful, I shall conclude with offering to you some of the most effectual means to secure yourselves in the Number of the Elect.

He then among you who has ears to hear let him hear. "Yet what will all this people's attention

* Chap. lv.

"profit them or me, unless Thou, Lord, vouchsafe to give my words a piercing warmth, and bless this audience with the Grace to practice what thou send'st me hither to teach them? O do it, Saviour, for thy Mercy's sake! What tho' our revolts are many, and we have sinn'd against thee; make not this people a disgrace to thy eternal throne of Glory: Make not of me an Instrument to aggravate their Guilt; nor let this Sermon, by their own neglect, heap coals of fire on their heads."

I. *Suffer both to grow till the harvest?* * God then, Christians, does suffer the cockle to grow up with the corn, the Wicked to intermix with the Good, undisturb'd? Yes, he does so. But you are not therefore to imagin, that God is pleas'd with the wickedness of the wicked; much less that he encourages or influences them to it. No: whatever gracious designs God may have for tolerating Evil Men in this world, his Will is nevertheless that all be good. *This is the will of God*, says St. PAUL, *your sanctification*. † It is the will of God then that you should, all of you, be sanctified by perseverance in Good. This appears evidently from his beneficence to man in the very first creation of him. He form'd him to his own image and likeness, endow'd him with original innocence, and afforded him the grace and means necessary to keep himself in that happy state. Nay the sacred Scripture absolutely tells us that God created Man upright, † that is in other words, he created him in a blessed state of habitual rectitude and propensity to the Sovereign Good he was made for. Can it then be doubted but that God's intention in bestowing all these favours upon mankind was, that They might all persist in the pursuit of goodness?

And yet, you'll say, They have acted quite the reverse." True: But was it the will of God, which influenced them to the opposit evil? No: So very far from it was his will, that he could not shew a greater dislike to the fall of human nature, than he did in the means he made use of to repair it. To restore us all to our primitive uprightness, he carried his generosity to the utmost excess, in the graces communicated to us, by virtue of his Passion and Death, by means of his holy sacraments, the Theological Virtues and other sacred gifts and habitudes of supernatural infusion. In short, whether we view ourselves in our Creation, or in the Redemption wrought in us; we shall find, that God has sown no evil seeds in our hearts. No: God, taking a general view of our beings saw all things which he had wrought in us, and they were greatly Good. All his production in our hearts and minds is Grace,

* St. Matth. xiii.

† 1 Thessalonians iii.

† Ecclesiasticus vii.

M 5

Virtue,

Virtue, and heavenly Knowledge, whose fair Offspring is the right of Inheritance to everlasting glory. All supernatural gifts and divinely good. So plain is it, that his blessed Purpose was and is, that all of us should be, and persist in being, Good. *This, this is the will of God your sanctification.*

And yet, alas, my God! In spite of this thy ineffably gracious purpose, how many evil men are there for One good-one; how many unhallow'd hearts for One truly sanctified, as Thou would'st have all to be! Whence comes then this hateful effect, so contrary to thy blessed Purpose? Can thy heavenly will be made void or thy Purpose frustrated? No, Christians: It cannot. God wills all men to be good, it is true: But then he wills them to be freely so, like the free-agents he made them. The good which is forced is no good at all, in him who is compell'd to it. He therefore gave you a free-will, that you might be truly good, by being freely so; and gave you a sufficient portion of grace, to bias your free-will to the choice of good, but not to controul it. For how could your will be free, if it was forced; and how could it be other than forced, if he had not left you at liberty to chuse good, or to reject it for it's opposit evil. If then you are such perverse enemies to yourselves as to prefer the evil, which he has render'd hateful in itself, to the good, the amiable good, which he invites and allures you to by grace; your happiness indeed is obstructed, but his blessed will is no ways frustrated. Since, tho' he wills you to be saved, by being good, yet he wills you to be free to the choice of, either saving Good, or destructive Evil. Let your option then be ever so bad, God is still unalterable, irresistible and blameless: All the unhappy variation, all the blame, is in yourselves. He made you good, regenerates you into good, and has produced in you nothing but good. It is your own fault then intirely, that you are not all as good, as he made you, redeem'd you, and wills you to be. If you are lost then, *Your Perdition is from yourself, O Israel.**

Sin therefore, however now deeply rooted in your hearts, is but a mere poisonous exotic. 'Tis originally of foreign growth to the soil which produces it: And the devil, that profest enemy to human nature, is the sower of it. *The Enemy*, says Christ, *came and oversow'd cockle among the Wheat.* It was this invidious fiend then, who first sow'd the destructive weed of Vice among the solid grain of Virtue, with which Heaven enrich'd the heart of man; and it is He, who, thanks to human indolence, keeps cultivating the growth of it. Ah! What Stupidity and Perversity then is yours, O mortals, to suffer yourselves to be thus robb'd of your present ease and eternal safety, by such an impotent adversary, "who, as *St. Augustin observes*,

* *Hosea xiii.*

"can only fawn or foam; and (like a growling mastiff fasten'd to a stake) may bark indeed, yet cannot injure any but such as are willing to be hurt." 'Tis your own faults then, if he injures you: You may thank your own folly or indolence in either placing yourselves within the length of his chain, or carelessly sleeping till he is unchain'd and comes within reach of you. 'Tis with you as with the men in this gospel: *While the men were asleep the Enemy came and sow'd the cockle.* And how would your enemy find opportunity to sow, among you, the cockle of Iniquity; did you not leave you souls upon the unguard, by suffering the Honours, Pleasures, Riches and Vanities of the World to lull you into a lethargy of grace?

Ah Christians! What are you then about? Do you consider the pestiferous nature of this weed which you suffer to get head in your souls? 'Tis of the nature of those poisons which corrupt all things, they are blended with, into themselves. Sin is the seed of *Satan*; and, once it takes root in a human breast, it so incorporates itself with his very nature, that it changes him at length into the very Offspring of the Devil. It is your Saviour himself who tells you so, in the very same Chapter from whence the Gospel for this day is extracted. *The cockle*, says he, *are the children of the Wicked One: And the Enemy, who sow'd them, is the Devil.* And how multiplied, alas, is not this cockle among the children of men! How does the number of the Wicked exceed the Good in the very heart of God's Church! How, (may I not say with the Prophet JEREMY?) * *How is the gold tarnish'd, the best colour changed! Her Nazarites, once the children of God, once whiter than snow for their innocence, purer than milk in their intentions, ruddier than the old ivory in their zeal and constancy, and fairer than the sapphire in the holiness of their lives: Now, alas, what are they become? Their face is made blacker than coals, thro' the foulness of a guilty conscience, and they are not known in the streets, † from the bundles of reprobation gather'd up for the fire.* Ah my gracious God! Whence comes all this desolation? Whence comes it, that *the iniquity of the daughter of thy people is become greater than the sin of Sodom: which was overthrown in a moment and hands took nothing in her.* ‡ But can you, O Catholics, be at a loss to account for it? When your constant conversation with heretics of every denomination, your eagerness after their flesh-pots of luxury and vice, and the unguarded abject complaisance, with which you give-up your-selves to their example, have corrupted many of you, from pure disciples of Christ, to children of the Wicked-One. For One of you,

* *Lament. iv.* † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

now,

now, who resembles the primitive Christians, how many of you are worse than the worst of heretics, by being wicked Catholics; nay more inconsistent than modern Infidels, *Fools who have said in their hearts, there is no GOD* *.

Ah how near are the words of *David* to being again verified even in our days! Should the Lord again look forth from heaven, upon the children of men; to see, if there be, who understandeth and seeketh after GOD; will he not find that *All have declined, and are become unprofitable together* †? Or if there are a few good men; how very small is the number, in comparison with That of the Wicked, even among Catholics, even in the midst of this captive flock, captive in its own native land! Who can discern the solid Wheat of the truly Pious from the destructive cockle of the walking Scandals which are oversown in the very midst of you? O my GOD! visit thou this people, as thou did'st thy Church of old, with thy correcting chastening hand. Send us such a bitter, such a sweeping, Persecution, as may effectually weed us of this cockle of Perdition; that the fair Grain of thy planting may grow up in Virtue undisturb'd. But No, says the Almighty, *suffer both to grow till the harvest, and, in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers: Gather up first the cockle and bind it into bundles to burn, but the Wheat gather ye into my barn.* ‡ Ah! what can all this mean, dear Saviour? Expound it to these hesitating mortals. For, Me (perhaps) they would mistrust; should I presume to explain thy meaning to them. *The harvest is the end of the world,* says Christ: § *And the reapers are the angels. Even as cockle therefore is gathered up and burnt with fire: so shall it be in the end of the world. The Son of Man shall send his angels, and they shall gather, out of his kingdom, all scandals and them who work iniquity: and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the Just shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father. He who hath ears to hear let him hear.* This then is a plain demonstration, that GOD is so far from encouraging the Wicked in their wickedness, that it is his gracious Will that all should be good.

II. Why then, you'll ask me, does GOD suffer, in the fruitful field of his Church, a mixture of such Opposites as the GOOD and the WICKED. To speak the truth, there is no possibility of diving into the Almighty's eternal secrets, for Us short-sighted beings. That is too impenetrable an abyss of Wisdom, for Us to fathom. Many probable conjectures, however, may be offer'd, sufficient to clear-up, to you, GOD's infinit Mercy in so doing.

* Psalm xlii.
† Ibid.

‡ Ibid.

§ St. Math. xiii.

First, in their seeds or principles, the BAD are no to be always externally distinguish'd from the GOOD. Their difference appears not till their maturity. By *their fruits you shall know them*, says Christ. * Look round this congregation, and behold: What a lovely crop of piety is here! What a heap of seemingly good Christians! But! there is cockle here as well as solid grain, "Root it out then, you'll say." Alas, where shall I begin? Who can discern the Good among you, from the Bad. Are you not all punctual to the hour of Prayer, all attentive to the Word of GOD, all grave at your devotions, frequent at communion, and forward to shew your eagerness after every indulgence? How then shall I gather up the cockle from among you, without danger of *rooting up the Wheat also*? No. *Suffer both to grow till the harvest*, says Christ. Then shall you distinguish the covetous worldling, who comes hither, more to promote his temporal lucre than to heap up treasures in heaven; the vain woman, who comes, more to shew her pride and her person to the men than to lay her heart open to GOD; the Self-elated witling, who attends to GOD's Word, not so much to improve his mind and heart, as to gratify his ears; not so much to follow the direction of GOD's Ministers as to find matter for censuring them; the prevaricator, whose gravity at prayer is but a cloak to hide the fraud, the tyranny, the calumny and cruelties, with which he loads his neighbour; and the wretch, who can calmly eat at the table of Christ, and yet cannot brook his own house till he has set it in a flame of contention; and, eager after an indulgence from Heaven, wants the soul to shew any indulgence to his wife, to his children, to his servants and dependants. All, all shall be distinguish'd from the really Good! Cockle, Hypocrites all: The angelic reapers, in the harvest, shall gather them into bundles to be burnt. While the Few who are left, the solid Grain, the Just, shall be gather'd into the granaries of Heaven, to *shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father*.

Methinks, I could fancy myself before the Throae of GOD, while the Reapers are gathering in the Harvest. Ah! Who, my GOD, *I say within myself*, are that group of Priests on the left? "Priests! They are a mercenary tribe of hirelings, such as thou must be, if thou speak not to this People, and do not warn them of their evil ways. These are cheats, who have made a traffic of the whites of their Eyes, and the smoothness of their tongues; Robbers who have enter'd; by the window and not by the door, to the Fold of my People: They, more intent on fleecing than on feeding; the flock, would rather loose a Soul, with flat-

* St. Math. vii.

“ tery, than hazard the loss of a dinner, by Gospel
 “ freedom. Therefore have they prophesied Lies
 “ and spoken vain things in soothing words. These
 “ are they of whom my Prophet *Jeremiah* say’th *
 “ that *They spoke the Vision of their own Heart,*
 “ *not from the Mouth of the Lord, saying, to them*
 “ *who blaspheme me, the Lord hath spoken: Peace*
 “ *shall be to you (when there was no Peace.) And,*
 “ *to Every-One, who walketh in the perversity of*
 “ *his own Heart, they have said; There shall no*
 “ *Evil come upon you.* With all their outside sanc-
 “ tity then, they are but painted Sepulchres.
 “ They are cockle all, hypocrits all, and bundled-
 “ up together for the unquenchable flames. Be
 “ not thou then like them; but go: Speak to my
 “ People; and fear not to tell them of their per-
 “ verse dealing. If they mind thee not; *Thou hast*
 “ *at least, deliver’d thy own Soul.*” I will my
 “ God, I will. Be they offended or pleased, I will
 “ utter the bold truths, thou bid’st me preach. Say
 “ then, Lord: Who are these unhallow’d bands so
 “ closely link’d with those false Prophets? “ Ah! It
 “ is a foolish multitude of laity: *It is a People*
 “ *provoking to wrath, and lying Children: Chil-*
 “ *dren, who will not hear the Law of God; who*
 “ *say, to the Seers, see not; and, to them who be-*
 “ *hold, behold us not those things which are right.*
 “ *Speak to us pleasant things, see Errors to us †*
 “ ‘Tis a Generation, who fawn upon the Wolf
 “ which devours them; and spurn at the shepherd,
 “ who would lead them to Pasture. They are coc-
 “ kle all, hypocrits all, who can prophane the Holy
 “ of Holies, by receiving the Bread of Angels and
 “ despising the hand they receive it from: *A Gene-*
 “ *ration of sippers who value a Priest but by the ap-*
 “ *pearance he makes; and take advantage of every*
 “ *little temporal Dependence he has on them, to*
 “ *give laws to, and trample upon, the dispenser of*
 “ *God’s Mysteries.* These are they of whom my
 “ prophet *Jeremiah* † has told you, that *the Lord hath*
 “ *dispersed them and will not add to regard them,*
 “ *because they have not revered the Face of the*
 “ *Priests.* Cockle, mere cockle and Hypocrits,
 “ worthy company for the false Prophets they run
 “ in search of. Suffer them, *Suffer Both to grow*
 “ *till the Time of the Harvest, when I will say to*
 “ *my Reapers: Gather up this Cockle to burn, but*
 “ *the Wheat gather ye into my Barn.*” Till then
 “ they are not to be distinguish’d, by common Eyes;
 “ and therefore not to be separated.

A Second reason for their toleration seems to be
 this: Were the wicked to bear the visible marks of
 their guilt; they would either create public horror,
 and, by being exposed to infamy, lose the natural
 shame, which might, one day, be a means of their

conversion; or else they might become, perhaps,
 a stumbling-block of scandal to the just. God
 therefore, probably, spares their reputation, for
 their own sakes; and lessens their scandal, for the sake
 of the just.

Thirdly, the Mercy and forbearance of God shine
 forth the more eminently in this gracious toleration
 of their perversity. What face can you have, O
 obstinate sinners to accuse God of severity, in the
 day of Harvest, for binding you up in faggots to
 burn? Had he not allow’d you time and means of
 conversion; you might have complain’d, with some
 colour, of the rigor of his justice. But what reply
 will you be able to make, when he shall remind
 you of his patience with you; of the time and op-
 portunities he has afforded you; of the holy Sacra-
 ments and other repeated graces, by which he invi-
 ted you to good. Ah! Wise then, infinitely wise
 is it, in Thee, My Almighty Sovereign, to bear
 with the wicked, *that thou may’st be justified in thy*
words and overcome when thou art judged. *

This puts me in mind of a Fourth light, in which
 we may reconcile this divine toleration with God’s
 infinit Goodness, from an observation of St. *Augus-*
tin. “ Every evil Man, says this venerable Father,
 “ who is suffer’d to live with impunity in this life,
 “ is suffer’d so to do, either that he may repent
 “ and amend; or, at least that he may be an ex-
 “ ercise to the just,” of Patience, Charity and
 other Christian Virtues; and that these may learn
 to avoid the fatal consequences which his guilt is
 threaten’d with. Tho’ then it be self-evident, that
 it is the will of God that All should be Good; yet
 there are many substantial reasons, why he suffers
 the wicked to exist.

III. Well, then, Christians, what do your hearts
 say to you? Upon an impartial scrutiny, are you
 all what you should and may be? What rank do you
 hold in the Church of God? Are you all of the
 solid seed, or are not some of you cockle? Have
 you reason to hope, that you are of the happy num-
 ber of God’s Elect, of his Friends, of such, in a
 word, as firmly believe and trust in him, and com-
 ply with the holy Ordinances of Him and his
 Church? Or have any of you reason to fear, you
 are of the number of the reprobate, enemies of
 God, opposers of his Counsels, and despisers of his
 precepts? If the former; be confident, but humble.
 Be thankful to God for the upright state he has
 placed you in, and let him among you, *who thinks*
he stands, take heed lest he fall. † If the latter; wait
 not till the extremity of the Harvest, nor venture
 to provoke the divine patience too far: Lest that pa-
 tience exasperated with abuse, be converted into

* Chap. xxiii.

† *Isaiah* xxx.‡ *Lament.* Chap. iv.* *Psalms* L.† *1 Cor.* x.

implacable wrath. *Know you not*, says St. PAUL, * *that the Goodness of GOD invites you to Repentance?* Bad as you are then it is in your own power to repent and be good: Otherwise; why should GOD wait, with such Graciousness, for your being so. True indeed it is, that the blessing of your election must derive originally from Him-himself. It is his goodness and grace gratis-given, which must first enable you to be saved. And therefore, says the Lord by the mouth of his Prophet, *I will Mercy to whom I will Mercy.* † Still, under himself, he has put the whole work of your predestination into your own hands. 'Tis your business intirely to lay hold on the assistance he affords you, to perform this task well. *First*, it is the absolute Will of GOD: *He wills that all men be saved*, ‡ says the Apostle to Timothy. *Secondly*, to prove how much he is in earnest, he offers you sufficient grace and means to do it, and died to purchase you that grace and those means. This is a matter of Faith, and determin'd by the Council of Trent. Besides that it is evident in itself: *Live I, saith our Lord GOD, I will not the death of the Impious, but that the Impious convert from his way and live. Convert, convert from your most evil ways; toby will you die, O House of Israel.* † The propensity you have to Sin is of your own acquiring; and must be partly of your own subduing. Therefore has GOD told you, that *the Lust of it shall be under you, and you shall have dominion over it.* § Guard yourselves then from all insurrections from that quarter. *Watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation.* || To what end, think you, does GOD send you so many good thoughts, so many inspirations and graces, by means of Sermons, spiritual Lectures, good Example and the holy Sacraments? To what end did he pour forth his precious Blood, lay down his blessed Life, and offer All for the Salvation of Mankind? Why, *I say*, did he do and suffer thus much, but to furnish you with the means to check the intestine revolutions of your passions, to quell the attempts of your external enemies, and to work your election among the Good, by repenting of your evil ways and rooting out of your hearts the cockle of iniquity? Reflect then, Christians, reflect seriously; and let not spiritual sloth rob you of these blessed advantages, by which you are so manifestly enabled to secure yourselves of the Number of the Elect.

IV. To come then to a conclusion: You see, beloved, that the chief cause of reprobation proceeds from negligence and the cowardly indolence of suffering yourselves to be lull'd asleep by the suggestions of Satan, by the vain allurements of

the world, and by the lusts of the flesh, *When the men were asleep, the cockle was sown.* Vigilance then and circumspection are the only sure means to preserve you from the like evil surprise. In short you must work your salvation in fear and trembling, as the apostle advises. * The first and great entrance to perfect wisdom is *the fear of the Lord.*

But when are we to make use of this holy fear and circumspection? At all times, on all occasions, and in every state of life. In a state of innocence, to preserve that inestimable jewel which so many snares are laid to rob us of: In a state of corruption, to recover that grace which we have lost, and are in so much danger of never calling back: And in a state of repentance, to prevent a relapse. Once we have fallen into sin, it depends wholly on GOD's unmerited goodness to prevent us with the grace of penance. What room then have we not to fear falling into such a dreadful state or persisting in it, when we are absolutely incapable, of ourselves, of ever rising from it? And if we happily are risen; how can we well avoid fearing the possibility of returning to it again? He, who has once proved inconstant, may prove so again: It is at least full as certain, that we have fallen, as that we are risen again. But, alas, what certainty have we, that we shall persevere to the end? Especially since, as St. Peter tells us, † our infernal enemy is ever watching, ever out upon the scout, like a famish'd lion in quest of his prey, seeking whom he may devour? What security have we then but in our fears and vigilance? What arms have we to encounter him with but *faith and fortitude*? Resist him then, Christians, as this apostle advises you, in *faith, fortitude and fidelity.*

Place a firm confidence in GOD, recur to him for strength in every temptation: But still be afraid of yourselves. *Blessed is the man who is always afraid.* † Remember, that you are neither more holy than David, nor stronger than Sampson, nor wiser than Salomon. These were surprised, and so may you be; if, like these, or like the men in this gospel, you suffer your fear to be lull'd asleep. Fear mischievous company; fear indolent solitude: In short, fear your own senses, and fear your most spiritual exercises. Devotion itself is often-times a temptation: At least, the modes of it may be so. The devil is a subtle enemy, always busy to overspread with cockle the best of actions in themselves. Self-love, vanity, obstinacy and the like motives or qualities inherent are apt to destroy, or at least to lessen, the merit of them. Be then upon your guard: Suffer not yourselves to be of the cockle: But, since you have it in your power to be of the solid grain; since you may be children of GOD, * Philip. iii. † 1. Pet. v. ‡ Prov. xxviii.

* Rom. ii. † Rom. ix. ‡ 1. Tim. ii. † Exech. xxxii. § Genesis iv. || St. Mark. xvi.

and it is his will you should be so; prove yourselves such, by shunning evil, by doing good, and by taking care that the whole and only motive of all your actions be the glory and love of God. That, at the general harvest, in the end of the world, when the Son of Man shall send his angels

to gather, out of his Kingdom, all scandals, and them who work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire, you may be found just in his eyes, and, like such, shine, as the sun, in the Kingdom of your Father. Which I beseech God, &c. In the Name, &c.

S E R M O N

On the SIXTH SUNDAY after the EPIPHANY.

St. MATHEW xiii. 31, 32.

The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a man took and sow'd in his field. Which is the Least indeed of all seeds: But when it is grown-up, it is greater than all herbs, and is made a tree; so that the fowls of the air come and dwell in the branches of it.

THE kingdom of heaven is an expression, Beloved Christians, which our Divine Saviour frequently makes use of, not only to point-out that mansion of glory which is reserved for the blessed portion of the Just, but even to signify the state of warfare by which the Just are to aspire to it. In short the kingdom of Heaven, properly speaking, is the whole collective body of his elect, which takes in those happy souls who are in actual possession of eternal felicity, and those who are destin'd to be, one day, equally happy with them in the joint fruition of that felicity. For, tho', with regard to us, they seem to be two different bodies, and therefore are distinguish'd by the diversifying epithets of Church-Triumphant, and Church-Militant; yet, with respect to Christ, they are one and the same kingdom of Heaven. "Every one judges, says an *antient philosopher*, † as he himself is affected." And it is very true. We poor hood-wink'd mortals, who are so miserably immersed in matter, whose every knowledge flows to us through the corrupted channels of our senses, and whose existence is measured by the difference of our limited durations, can judge of nothing but by these narrow rules. And therefore, when we compare the incorruptible intellectual and eternal happiness of the blessed above with the corruptible sensitive and mortal condition of the blessed on earth; we are apt to conceive them as two distinct people, two kingdoms widely situated from each other: Where-

† *Aristotle.*

as, in reality, they are but one and the same kingdom in the eyes of Christ, who is the eternal wisdom of God, looking from end to end strongly and disposing all things sweetly. To him there is nothing past, nothing future; but all things which were, are, or ever will be, are ever present, in that indivisible eternity by which he subsists. Thus then does Christ consider that sacred collection of souls whom he foresees his own for all eternity. Tho' we may distinguish them as members of two distinct Churches, the Triumphant and the Militant; to him they are but one and the same people, of one kingdom of heaven in possession or in certain hopes. The Triumphant are still militant to him in those labours and sufferings, by which they have earn'd their present victorious Crowns, and which, tho' past to them, are ever present in the gracious Remembrance of their Almighty Paymaster. And the Militant, in the very midst of their struggles, are triumphant with him in that immortal Crown, which he has in store for them, and which, tho' seemingly distant from their present reach, is nevertheless actually theirs, in virtue of the all-sufficient grace he affords them to attain to it.

In the sight of God then the Saints above and the truly Faithful on Earth, are but one kingdom of heaven, with this single difference, that the Former are in actual possession of the Crown they have been struggling for, and the Latter are actually contending for the Crown which is already theirs, by the assurance of well-grounded Hope. These are advancing and hurrying after Those to the Same End and by the Same Means. To forward These therefore in their Christian Race, our Saviour frequently puts them in mind of the blessed kingdom, which his Mercy has made them members of. And this he does, in different manners, to suit himself to their different tempers and exigencies.

gencies. Sometimes he proposes to them the End, at other times the Means. One time he spirits them up to a noble Emulation, by placing before them the glorious Rewards which their Compatriots have attain'd to; and another time he takes occasion to shew them how those Rewards are to be attain'd to. In the Gospel for last Sunday, He compares the kingdom of heaven to a plentiful harvest; on purpose to shew the Rewards attending on those persons, who untainted by the cockle of Iniquity, have ripen'd into fruits worthy of the granaries of the Almighty. *Then, says he, shall the Just shine, as the sun, in the Kingdom of their Father.* And now, in the Gospel for this day, to shew by what means that lustre, that glory, is to be obtain'd, he compares the same Kingdom of Heaven to a grain of mustard-seed. *The Kingdom of Heaven, says Christ, is like a grain of mustard-seed, which a Man took and sow'd in his field: Which is the Least, indeed, of all seeds. But when it is grown up, it is greater than all herbs, and is made a tree; so that the fowls of the air come and dwell in the branches of it.* To reap the spiritual Fruit then which our heavenly Master designs us in this comparison, let us reason a little upon it; and We shall find, that the Mustard-plant is a Type of the Holy Church of Christ, an Emblem of her sacred Doctrine, and a Figure of her blessed Faith. This you will agree to, Christians, when I have shewn you, as I now propose to do,

- I. The lowly diminutive Seeds, to which this Holy Church owes it's Being;
- II. The immoveable Solidity, on which her Doctrines are built; And
- III. The sacred Security which They enjoy who seek Shelter under the extensive Cover of her infallible Faith.

"But first: To Thee, Almighty Sower of this sacred plant, with humble heart, I lift my suppliant voice. Continue Thou to cultivate the growth of what thou hast sown in us. Still let the never-failing Fountain of thy precious Blood refresh thy Church on earth; that It may prosper and encrease, till thou shalt join it with thy Church triumphant in one blessed People. Sprinkle both Me and all thy Ministers with Grace and Unction, to strengthen and confirm her members in her solid doct'rins. And forcibly to draw all men, but chiefly this thy little Flock, to seek their safety under her protecting shade, make every air perceptibly inclement to them, but what they breathe under the shelter of her all-saving Faith, *Amen; My God! In thy unwearying Mercy, Lovely Jesus, say, Amen; and it shall be so.*"

VOL. I.

I. The seed of the Mustard-plant, Christians, you all know, I suppose, to be of a very diminutive size, and of *the Least indeed of all seeds*, as the divine Sower of them all tells you. What a puny thing to compare that Sacred Body with, which embraces the upper and nether surface of the globe; and extends her branches from the centre to the circumference of this terraqueal universe! You, if you wanted a figure to express the Church by, would hardly condescend to stoop so low for a simile. No: Nothing less would serve your turn than something as enormous as your ambition. You would scorn the hardy beech, the lofty cedar and wide spreading oak; you would be for overlooking the highest *Alps* and soaring above the clouds, to ransack the very spheres for a comparison. At least, the last thing you would think of would be of comparing the majestic Body of Christ's Church to a little grain of mustard-seed. What is there, you would cry to yourselves, what is there more despicable to the eye; more elusive of the touch; or of so little estimation in itself? But let me ask you in turn, Christians: What could be more contemptible in it's appearance, more subject to ridicule, or less in repute than the Church of Christ, in It's Beginning? And how should it be otherwise; if we consider the seed and the soil which produced it? The seeds were a surprising set of seeming, and seemingly absurd, paradoxes; the jest of human pride and evasive of the eye and reach of mortal understanding. In fact, what could appear more foolish or weak to the superficial world than the notion of a God born with human flesh, of human low-living parents; the One a poor homely-attired Woman, the other a day-labouring Man: A God brought forth in a stable, exposed in a manger, without any attendants but those, and an ox, and an ass: A God educated in a cottage, conversant chiefly with beggars, nay often with notorious sinners: A God crucified, and that not in a common manner, but between two felons; and nail'd to his Cross, while They were only tied to theirs; as if they had apprehended more, and thought it of more consequence to prevent a rescue of Him than of them: A God, in a word, adjudged, by his own Nation, in a judiciary trial, a common nuisance more worthy of death than a public harden'd condemn'd murderer? What, *I say*, could be more seemingly foolish and weak than all this? Yet such were the seeds, the principles, which gave birth to that spacious Church, which is since grown to so stately a bulk. To what then shall we attribute this wondrous Encrease? To the soil they were sown in? No: This was more despicable still, in the eyes of Mankind. Twelve poor vulgar persons, most of them Fishermen, of no extraordinary natural genius, unpolish'd, unpro-

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vided with riches or power, illiterate, I had almost said surprisingly ignorant, of all which the world calls Knowledge, were the soil from which God raised his Church. O my God! What diminutive beginnings were these to give to the most glorious work of thy Wisdom! Ah how well hast thou verified thy Word by the mouth of thy Prophet, * *I will destroy the Wisdom of the Wise; and the Prudence of the Prudent I will reject?*

In fact, Christians, if we compare the present extensive greatness of God's works in his church, to the seemingly contemptible state of it in its beginning; shall we not find, that he has fulfill'd his promise? For to use the same Prophet's words, † *Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world to support these poor Fishermen in their new and unheard-of tenets?* But no: God wanted not the assistance of worldly eloquence, of earthly wisdom, to plant his sacred church. In the wisdom of God, says St. PAUL, ‡ *the world did not by wisdom know God; therefore, did it please God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them who believe.* Christ then, beloved, as this Apostle observes, § *chose not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, to preach his humble doctrine.* On the contrary, *the foolish things of the world, he chose, that he might confound the wise; and the weak, that he might confound the strong.* || In short, *that no flesh might glory in his sight,* the Eternal Wisdom chose the most foolish, abject, and contemptible men, to subject the false wisdom of the world to a seemingly foolish, weak and despicable doctrine. And what was this doctrine, but that which I have already mention'd. *We preach,* says the Apostle, ** *a Christ, and that Christ crucified, to the Jews indeed a scandal, and to the Gentils, foolishness:* But still, that foolishness in the eyes of the world is nothing less in itself, and nothing less to the elect than the power and wisdom of God. No wonder therefore, that St. Paul should be sent, like the other Apostles, *to preach the Gospel, not in wisdom of speech, that the Cross of Christ might not be made void.* For tho' *the word of the Cross to them indeed who perish, is foolishness,* says the Saint; yet *to them who are saved it is the power of God.* *†

Fear not therefore, my little flock, says Christ. † *For foolish as you may seem in the eyes of the world, To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God.* § Nor is it flesh and blood which has reveal'd them to you, but my Father who is in Heaven.*|| Fear not, I say, weak, and absurd as these mysteries may appear to the carnal; yet

shall you, with them, subdue the pride of worldly wisdom. *For that which is the foolish of God is wiser than men; and that which is the weak of God is stronger than men.* * Fear not, in a word, O little Flock! For, little and contemptible as your Beginning is, yet *it has pleased your heavenly Father to give you a kingdom,* † a kingdom of grace, of power and holiness, over-spreading the earth with it's authority, and joining hands in one holy communion with the Blessed above. Such Christians, such as I have shewn them to you, such were once the diminutive beginnings and such is now the dilated magnitude of this Twin-Sister of the kingdom of Heaven, which our Saviour compares to the Mustard-Plant, for the littleness of it's origin. And indeed what could exceed the justness of this comparison, whether we consider the Church in her rise, or view her in her present greatness and extension. The Mustard-Plant is extremely diminutive in it's seed: So was the Church of Christ. In short, analogously speaking, the seeds of both are the least, indeed, of all seeds. Again when the Mustard-Plant is grown, *it is greater than all herbs, and is made a tree.* So this divine plant of the Almighty's cultivating, the Catholic Church, has shewn itself, in it's growth, greater and more permanent than all the spurious savage plants, o Man's and Satan's planting, which vainly claim the title of a Church. For the truth of this, we need but cast an eye on the immoveable solidity of her doctrines.

II. All the sacred doctrines of the Catholic Church are wisely and admirably rear'd upon the solid foundation of Humility, Self-denial, and the Cross of Christ. A lowly Foundation, indeed; but so much the fitter for the support of so vast an edifice. Every plant, from the Sycamore to the Cedar, by so much the deeper it's roots are fix'd in the earth, so much the more loftily and widely is it enabled to spread the verdant honours of it's head. And thus is it, that the Spouse of Christ, inspired by his Divine Spirit, and led by his example, teaches all her children, to raise the sacred plant of grace in their souls to the highest eminence of dilated charity, by sinking deeply the roots of true humility. "O sacred, venerable humility, says St. Augustine, "thou, thou wast the power, which drew down "the Son of God to the womb of the Holy Virgin Mary; which cover'd him with ignoble rags, "to cloath us with the robes of virtue; and circumcised him in the flesh, that we might be circumcised in mind, by Self-denial. Thou, "thou didst scourge him in body, that we might "escape the scourge of sin: Thou didst crown "him with thorns, that we, humbled in imitation

* *Isaiah xxix.* † *1 Cor. i.* ‡ *Chap. xxxiii.*
 § *1 Cor. i.* § *Ibid.* || *Ibid.* ** *Ibid.*
 *† *Ibid.* † *St. Luke xi.* *§ *Ibid. viii.*
 *|| *St. Math. xxi.*

* *1 Cor. i.* † *St. Luke xi.*

" of him, might be crown'd by him with eternal
roses: Thou, thou didst induce that sovereign
physician, who heals and restores all things by
his only word, to take upon him our infirmities,
that he might heal us distemper'd mortals," by
the love of his Cross.

And this, Christians, this is that solid doctrine,
which your holy mother the Church, so frequently
preaches and inculcates to you; worthily therefore
compared to the little grain of mustard-seed, which,
which once it has taken root, becomes a spacious
tree. From such humble doctrines has the Church
gain'd, from time to time, that solidity of greatness,
which now enables it to spread itself through the
different regions of the whole universe. This, this
is the same blessed phenomenon prefigured in the vi-
sion of *Mordecai*, under the similitude of a little
spring which afterwards encreased to an exceeding
great river, and then became an immense flood of irre-
sistible light, and a new sun in the Heavens. Weak
and shallow as these sacred doctrines appear'd, in their
first source, yet have they swoln, as they ran on,
and, like an irresistible torrent, borne-down before
them all the maxims of the world and the flesh,
and are become the avow'd light of truth to the
whole world. This again is that little pebble, which
rolling from the rock Christ Jesus, has broken in
pieces the enormous statue of the infernal *Nebu-
chadnezzar*: And this it is, the loud report of whose
rapid progress has spread itself from country to
country, till the eccho of it rebounded from pole to
pole. *Their sound*, says the Psalmist, * *has gone
forth into all the Earth and unto the ends of the
globe of the world, the words of them.* Which St.
Paul, in the tenth to the Romans, applies to the
sacred doctrines of the Apostles, in the very infancy
of the Church; Well then may we apply them in
our days; when that sacred Church, which is so
justly compared, in it's beginning, to the little stone,
we read of in *Daniel*, *hewn out of the mountain
without hands*, is now grown to be a great and im-
moveable mountain itself, and *filleth the whole earth*.
And to what is it's solidity and encrease owing, but
to the humble mortified lowly principles it sprung
from? For however diminutive it be in it's origin,
"humility, says St. Anselm, is a huge mountain
in the summit of which, a flood of light, discovers
a fair tribe of comely personages, that is, the su-
blimest virtues." In short let us consider the
Church in what light we will, let us compare her
doctrines with whatever bears an analogy with
them; we shall still find, that her present exten-
siveness and solidity is owing to the humble seed
which she sprung from originally.

To return then to the divine comparison we set
out with, one diminutive seed, and that *the least in-*

* Psalm xviii.

deed of all seeds, produces the trunk of the mustard
plant, every branch produces thousands more, till it
becomes a tree fit for all the fowls of the air to take
shelter under. So from the humble seed of Christ's
Cross, and the humility and mortification accom-
panying it, sprung the sacred trunk of his Church,
his blessed Apostles. The death of every one of
these has sown thousands of Christians. One ser-
mon of St. Peter brought forth five thousand at
once, besides the many thousands, who were after-
wards ingrafted by his and the other Apostles means.
And not to mention the untold number of souls,
which the blood of each single martyr and the sanc-
tity of each holy bishop, confessor, virgin and other
saint have yielded to Christ, how many millions have
since been, and daily are, converted to the christian
faith, by means of evangelical preachers and teach-
ers! How many conversions are daily wrought, by
an inspiration, a devout lecture, a sermon, a sincere
confession, a well-wrought communion! All the
blessed product of that sacred doctrine which the
Catholic Church teaches, and has been enrich'd
with from the humble but fertile seed of Christ's
Cross. And how many fruitful seeds of virtue shoot
forth daily from this flourishing plant! What sanc-
tity in every little act of humility; in every little
condescension to the weakness of a neighbour; in a
visit paid to the sick, imprison'd or distress'd, for
Christ's sake; in short, in the variety of holy prac-
tices which the doctrine of Christ's Church incul-
cates: Practices the more rich and pregnant with
spiritual fruits as they lie oftentimes conceal'd from
the observation of the world and frequently from
our own.

Wisely then does our divine Lord compare the
militant part of the kingdom of Heaven to the grain
of mustard-seed, which indeed is the least of all seeds:
But when it is grown, it is greater than all herbs
and is made a tree. The justness of this compari-
son however will appear still more evidently; if we
proceed to consider the sacred security which they
enjoy, who seek shelter under the extensive cover of
the Church's infallible faith.

III. The grain of mustard-seed then, tho' it be
the least indeed of all seeds at first, yet, when it is
grown, it is greater than all herbs and is made a
tree, and such a tree that the fowls of the air come
and dwell in the branches of it. So the Holy Cat-
holic Church, small and feeble as it might ap-
pear in it's seed, has since been able, speaking in a
figurative stile, to attract to it all the fowls of the
air, that is, to explain the figure, all the rational
part of mankind, the greatest hearts, the sublimest
understandings, the most noble and puissant princes
of the earth. In short all intelligent creatures,
those excepted whose restless passions suffer them not
to soar above the mire of vice and folly they are
plunged

plunged in, have gloried in ranging themselves under the safe and wide-extended covert of Catholic faith, there, there it is, that they have found, and there it is that all may find, the perfect repose of conscience, which every where else is to this day fought in vain.

Among this intellectual kind of fowls we may reckon, *First*, those pious princes, who have made no other use of their elevated stations than to give glory to GOD, in his Church. Such are the three eastern kings, a *St. Margaret of Scotland*, a *St. Edmond* and *St. Edward of England*: *Secondly*, those learned and holy divines, fathers and prelates, who made the laws of GOD and his Church the subject of their study and practical conversation with men, and knew no other wisdom than that of the gospel and faith of Christ: Such as a *St. Jerom*, the two holy *Augustines*, a *St. Thomas of Canterbury*, and many others! And *Thirdly*, those illustrious saints of both sexes, who, after the example of the humble lark building her nest on the ground, have made humility, self-depression and the Cross of Christ, their means of soaring to the highest perfection of faith and good works. And all these have attain'd to the glory they are now in possession of, by dwelling, in the branches of this sacred all-protecting tree of wisdom, the Catholic Church.

To explain this allegory yet farther, let me just observe to you, Beloved, that there are three sorts of persons in the world; who may, yet do not, all, reap the benefit of her sacred shelter. The *First*, in their affections, are, if I may be allowed to lay it, a kind of amphibious creature, as it was between the bird and the insect. Such are they who, endow'd by the Almighty with souls capable of soaring like eagles, to the highest Heavens, yet with the serpent feed upon dirt: confining all their thoughts to the earth, and all their Sollicitude to the establishing themselves in it by riches, possessions and worldly means. The *Second*, are like amphibious, but seem to divide nature between the fowl and the fish. Such are they who swim or rather wallow and immerse themselves in voluptuous inordinate pleasures: giving themselves wholly up to luxury, idle company, gaming, drinking or other infamous amusements; A wide and horrible ocean overrun with monsters of prey, forever agitated with tempests, and forever subject to imminent dangers; in which, if they persist, they must inevitably be lost and fall the wretched dupes of the all devouring *Leviathan* of hell. But there are a *Third* sort who may properly be call'd the birds of Heaven itself. These are they, who, tho' their habitation be on earth, still wisely keep their minds and hearts wholly fix'd on the glory they were born to aspire to; and, sheltering themselves under the holy faith of Christ feed upon that spiritual food

which is there plentifully provided for them. This sacred food is the holy Sacraments, spiritual reading, sermons, fasts, alms-deeds, tears of compunction, prayer, meditation and an almost infinit variety of pious exercises, suited to every-one's condition and exigences, plentifully administer'd to all the faithful in the Church, and no where else to be obtain'd.

To make some application now of what has been said and come to a conclusion: To what a wretched reptile condition is not this unhappy nation sunk; since it has foolishly forsaken the sacred security it enjoy'd under the covert of this Church's infallible faith. How much more of the nature of the insect, than of the eagle, is there not in the people of this miserable apostate nation, since they have sought the inclement region of error and irreligion. Are not all either serping in the dirt of false lucre, or wallowing in the waters of contradiction; a sea of false delights inconsistent with the nature of a rational being: All, *I say*, if I except you, and a few more, brethren, who are wise enough to cling to safety, under the shade of infallible truth?

Yet ah Christians! It depends, in great measure, upon you, great as the ruin of your dear-loved country is, to restore it to it's primitive holy splendor. Even you of this little flock to whom I am now preaching, had you but the dispositions of those five thousand to whom *St. Peter* first gave the light of the gospel: Even you might reingraft all your countrymen, in the holy flock, the sacred trunk, from whence they are miserably lopt. 'Tis true you are not five thousand in number: Nor I a *St. Peter*. But you are, all of you, seeds of the same sacred plant, and want only to exert the virtue and vivacity of the faith which is in you to be as fertil as they were. Dvest yourselves then, for a few minutes, of the consideration of the personal inabilities of your preacher, and only attend to the saving truths utter'd to you. Wide as any of your pastors may be of *St. Peter* in point of sanctity, they are his successors in the Apostleship and in the power of preaching to you; and therefore if you but resolve to follow the evangelical advice which they give you, and follow it with the same ardor as the five thousand did to whom the Apostle preach'd, the Holy-Ghost shall descend on you all; you shall all become the happy instruments of converting thousands, by the testimony of your holy lives: and the diminutive seeds of each little congregation of you, shall grow-up and become greater than all the wild herbs of sects in this kingdom, and shall at length be made one great substantial tree of truth and virtue; so that all the *fowls in the air*, all the rational creatures in this island, shall, in conjunction with the faithful of other nations, shelter themselves under the purity of it's communion.

Come then, Beloved, to compass this glorious end, let us join hands and hearts. After the model shown us from above, let us draw from a self-depression and littleness in our own thoughts, a greatness of glory to God, and edification to our neighbour. Little let us be, by humillity in doing good; little, by patience in bearing evils; little in the cross of Christ and contempt of the world: But great and strong, as the mustard-seed, let us endeavour to grow in virtue and favoriness; great in a lively faith; great in a well-grounded hope, and great in extensive charity to each-other and in an unbounded love of God: Great, in a word, in

good example, and strong in the perfection of a christian life. O grant it thou, dear Saviour, by thy Cross and Passion: Keep us in safety from the inclement air of error, infidelity and sin, under the shelter of the mystically fruitfull tree of wisdom, thy unerring Church. There feed us with the heavenly nouriture thou has't provided for us: Confirm us with thy efficacious grace: And so refresh us with the sweet repose of conscience, which there and only there is to be found; that we may take a sure and uninterrupted flight from this our mortal pilgrimage, to the immortal kingdom thou dost invite us to. Which I beseech God, &c. *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

O T U A G E S I M A S U N D A Y.

St. MATTHEW XX. 4, 16.

Go ye into my vineyard and what shall be just, I will give you . . . For many are call'd but few chosen.

MANY call'd; and why, but that they may be chosen? Whence comes it then, Beloved, that, of the many who are call'd, the chosen are so few? Is not He, who calls, that all-beneficent God, who *wills all men to be saved*? Are not they, who are call'd, free-agents empower'd to make sure their election? Are not the conditions of election ineffably gracious, on the Almighty caller's part; and extremely easy, on the part of those who are call'd? God had the absolute right, if he had so pleased, to oblige us to serve and obey him, under pain of the severest punishments, without being any-ways obliged to reward us for our labour, when we had done: Whereas to encourage us to do willingly what he could have forced us to do, he gave us the power of choice; and by entering into a gracious covenant with us of infinit rewards for a little finite service, which himself had no need of he mercifully put our election to those rewards into our own hands. What could be more gracious on the Almighty's part? Now all, which is required on our parts, towards insuring those infinit rewards to ourselves, is, that we love our infinit benefactor above all other beings; and give him proofs of the sincerity of our love, by the love we bear to his creatures for his sake; in a word, by fulfilling his commandments: And his commandments are not

grievous, as the Apostle * bears witness. Nay, so far are they from being grievous, that the general observance of them is the only sure pledge we have in this mortal state, for our personal enjoyment of peace, property, plenty, health, liberty and even life. It is true indeed, that the perverse propensity of our nature to evil has nevertheless raised ideal difficulties in the practice of these commandments: But then, that those difficulties might be no obstruction to our compliance with the divine will, our gracious master has promised us grace sufficient to enable us to surmount them. What then can be more easy than what is required on our parts to make sure our election to glory? *Go ye into my vineyard*, says the Lord to us all, *and what shall be just I will give you*. All therefore are call'd to earn what wages they will: The wages of everlasting life, or the wages of eternal death. If then we earn the former; it is the merciful effect of God's infinit unmerited bounty in calling us: But if we earn the latter; it is the miserable fruit of our own perverse folly in forfeiting the election he affords us the means to secure. So far then, Christians, we all know of Predestination, that all are call'd to eternal glory; and that the will of God is, that all be chosen to it as well as call'd. But ah! Who, but God, knows which of us shall gain or lose our election? O the dreadful suspense on which depends a whole eternity of ineffable bliss or unutterable woe: The irremissible enjoyment of God! or the irrevocable loss of him! O dear-loved souls! Souls created by God and for God! How then

* 1 John v.

shall we forbear to tremble, every one, for our safety, poor creatures as we are at present, held in suspense amidst such happiness and misery; with every reason to claim a right to Heaven, but with every doubt to justify our fears of Hell; with every reasonable hope of enjoying God, but with every danger of losing him forever? But: Dearest fellow exiles! The tender love I bear you will not suffer me to leave you thus agonizing on the rack of so gnawing a suspense. Too much does my fond regard for you make your misery my own, not to urge me, this day, to console you and remove your anxious doubts with tidings of joy. Courage then, Beloved Brethren, courage. Heaven is your own, if you will have it. Jesus, this day, opens the gates of it to you and invites you in. *Go ye into my vineyard, and what shall be just I will give you.* He offers you the wages of eternal life for a little temporal labour; and is ready to take the labouring-oar off your hands, by co-operating with you. He has suffered pain and death on an ignominious cross, that you may enjoy life and bliss on a throne of glory. *What more then should the Lord have done to his Vine and has not done it?* * Or what more joyful tidings can I bring for your comfort? Yet what grounds have I even for giving you this consolation; if, vow'd enemies to yourselves, you will rebelliously thwart the gracious designs your bounteous God has upon you? There is no room to fear the Almighty's desires: Your own are all the matter of my dread. Settle but a firm correspondence with him; and I pronounce you saved. Let Scholastics then spare henceforth their lungs for some more useful purpose: Let them desist from their pompous explanations, and even shut up their volumes so little understood, so very unintelligible. Away, away with those big, not yet unriddled, words: *Predestination, Prescience, Prevision, Predefinition* and what not. And let the plain intelligible words of Christ take place. Let us not pay such servile homage to terms, we are strangers to the meaning of, as to over-look the truths we comprehend. Two words of Jesus have set me more right, than all the volumes of the Scholastics can do. *Go ye into my vineyard; and what shall be just I will give you.* Whence I gather, that the whole argument of *Predestination* amounts to nothing more than this. None are lost, who are not willing to be lost: it being a matter of eternal truth; that

I. *Acting well* is the infallible means of ascertaining our *Predestination* to eternal happiness: *And*

II. *Acting ill, or not acting well*, is the sure cause of damnation to eternal misery.

* *Isaiah v.*

" O God of love who did'st create us all to live,
" and wilt not that any of thy creatures perish!
" Vouchsafe to make us sensible how much thou
" has't left our misery or happiness to our own e-
" lection. And since thy mercy, to make us
" doubly blessed, has liberally put it in our power
" to make our own, the bliss to which thou did'st
" and do'st still call us, by placing life and death
" before us in their genuin colours; O graciously
" infuse into our souls thy saving wisdom and sweet-
" ly lead us to the happy choice, thou wilt not
" force us to."

I. The great and weighty affair of our salvation, revered audience, depends not alone upon one will. It must be the joint effect of two. God's will and our own. It is a known, and universally confest truth that God *saves only the willing*. But that it is his absolute will, that all should be saved, appears strongly from the words of my text; in which he invites all to work in his vineyard and promises to all a recompence proportion'd to their labours. *Go ye into my vineyard and what shall be just I will give you.* It appears from the inward calls of lights, inspirations, checks, and other graces with which *he enlightens all men coming into this world*, as St. *John* * witnesses. And it appears in the external voice of sermons, lectures, converse, example, miracles and other like means, by which he invites all. *The God of God's! our Lord* (says DAVID †) *both spoken and call'd the earth*. "And what earth, what earth? *Africa* perhaps, or *Asia*? says St. *Augustin*." Was *Europe* the only earth he call'd, or *France* alone, or only *England*, or barely some single province? No, no: God is no partial niggard, no haughty exceptor of persons, "For he (says this venerable father) he who *both call'd the earth, from the rising of the Sun even to the going down* † has left no parts of it un-
" call'd." And why, think ye, has he call'd all, but because, as the Apostle says, *he wills all men to be saved*? § And for all men to be saved, there needs no more to be added, to this saving will of God; than that every man also do will himself to be saved.

Ah! Why then do we presume to find fault with the divine conduct? Why murmur and think it hard, that the innocence of all human nature should have been deposited in trust with the first of men, and the wills of a whole free and rational world lodged in that of one weak and inconstant creature? To what purpose, I say, do we repine at an irremediable evil past, which, without subtilizing upon it, we have it in our power to repair. Enough is it for our consolation, that all the mischiefs devolved to us from our grandfire *Adam* can

* Chap. i.

† *Psalms*. xlix.

‡ *Ibid*.

§ *1 Tim.* ii.

do us no damage, unless we will; now, that our Divine Mediator has put-on the appearance of a sinner, by taking upon him the *Similitude of the flesh of sin*.^{*} There is now ingrafted in human nature a seminal grace, as St. *Augustin* calls it, which spreading itself abroad from out of his sacred wounds, whence it flows, vigorously opposes that corruption which was sown by *Adam* and convey'd to posterity. Now as sin is originally implanted in all, by the *Old Adam's* sowing it in the nature of all; so is the sin-destroying seed of Divine Grace offer'd to all, by *JESUS CHRIST*, the *New Adam*, who died to merit it for all. "As the carnal seed," says St. *Augustin*, was vitiated by *Adam*, so "does the spiritual seed of *Grace*, urge through *JESUS CHRIST*." Thus then, O hapless man, true let it be, that thy nature, made refractory by the contumacy of thy first parent, agitates thee with innumerable rebellious emotions. Still is it comfortably as true, that, re-invigorated by the obedience of a second much better Parent, thou art assisted to conquer those with full as many emotions to good. I own, O mortals, that, without any actual guilt of yours, you have been infected by the venom of that bitter bitter morsel of disobedience. But then you too must own, that you cannot, without your own guilt, miss of being cleansed from all infection by the Blood of Him who, for us all, *was made obedient to death, even the death of the Cross*. † "It was not in your power," says the same holy *Father*, not to be born of *Adam*. But it is in your power, by believing in Christ to be born of him." That is, in short, *Adam* sinning, and you in him, you were not free to feel or not to feel the effects of that original fall. But, Christ now risen and human nature being restored by his rise, you are now free to reap or not reap the fruits of his Redemption, wrought for All, and offer'd to All. All of you therefore have now your salvation in your own hands.

Man indeed with all his liberty can do nothing without God. And God will do nothing without Man. Certain it is indeed that the Almighty is despotic Sovereign over the whole universe, and reigns Supreme over *Free* as well as *necessary Agents*. But when he rules not the actions of *Free Agents* with the same kind of dominion as he does the effects of *Necessary Causes*. The *Latter* he controuls, but the *Former* he sweetly guides, directs and governs without prejudice to their freedom. What complacency does he not always treat our souls with? He snatches not our consent with tyrannic violence; but sweetly courts it with the endearments of a parent. He does not drag us, in spite of our will, into his service; but invites us to do willingly what he is willing we should do, and invites us with the most encouraging promises. *Go ye into my vine-*

^{*} Rom. viii.

† Ps lxx. ii.

yard and what shall be just I will give you. If in his eternal Decrees he acts without consulting us; he still constantly acts without injury to us. Previously to his infinit Prescience, his infinit Mercy wills us *All to be saved*. And pronounces not sentence of life or death but in sight of our choice of the *Former* or the *Latter*. So that every creature possess of Reason and Free-will, is at liberty to be freely saved, is at liberty to be freely damn'd. Far from us then, with horror, be banish'd the *Satanic* Predestination of *Pelagius*, which impiously robs the world of Grace! Far from us the *Infernal* Predestination of *Calvin*, which robs Mankind of Freedom! The *First*, too sacrilegiously courteous to human nature, lays open every avenue to Pride, Ingratitude, and insolent Presumption. The *Second*, too basely big with blasphemy, what can it tend to but folly, madness libertinage, and wild Despair? Far, my God, far from us as hell, for-ever be the thought of separating heavenly grace from human liberty, or human liberty from thy assisting Grace! What would thy Graces be without our freedom but absolute necessity? What, without thy Assisting Grace, could our liberty be but mere licentiousness? In short, Christians, if we part either from the other; what less do we attempt to do, than to take away all Predestination from God, all Providence from the world, God himself from Human Nature, and Human Nature from Man? "Take away Free-will," says St. *Bernard*, and "there is nothing to be saved: Take away Grace and there will not be where-with to save." Ah! let us then subscribe to what the holy St. *Celestine* so divinely says. Let us own that "Such is the ineffable Goodness of the Divine Majesty to Man-kind as absolutely to will, that his own divine gifts should become also our human merits." That is, in short, those very actions with which we earn heaven, (if ever we are so happy as to purchase it) are both the gifts of God and our own merits. And how should they not be God's; when they never could have been without God? For *Not I*, says St. *PAUL*, ** but the Grace of God with me*. And how should they not be our own, when we co-operate and apply our own consent and endeavours, and without us they would not be? For, as St. *Augustin* beautifully remarks, "God is call'd our Help: And No-One can be help'd, who does not himself willingly and jointly act." Who then can deny those actions to be God's, when God is the donor of them? Who can doubt of their being Man's, when Man possesses them by gift from God? Nothing can be God's in a stricter sense than those actions, which, without God's special assistance, could not exist: And nothing can be more ours than actions which never would have been without our co-operation. To conclude with-

^{*} Cor. x.

the same sacred writer. "The Good we do is both GOD's and our own. It is his, inasmuch as he disposes our Will to do it: It is ours, inasmuch as GOD would not enable us to do it without our free consent."

Hence is it, dear-loved Christians, that, as we call-in, to our assistance, the Divine Grace, in quality of *First Cause* of our Salvation; so does the Almighty call-in, for a joint operator, our free-will as a *second cause* of it. *Convert us, O GOD our Saviour*, † is our frequent prayer. *Turn ye to me then with all your hearts*, ‡ is the constant reply of GOD. A pliability of heart to the Divine Will must be a gift from GOD, and he has promised that gift to all, who will accept it. *I will give ye*, says he, *A heart of flesh*. * But then he gives it, on condition that we shall co-operate with him towards mollifying the flint in our breasts and molding it again into flesh. *Make to yourselves a new heart*, says he. † Like *David*, we all hanker after rewards from GOD, and when we do begin to serve him, we may, every-one, say with the PSALMIST, *I have inclined my heart to do thy justices for retribution*. ‡ And we cannot be more desirous of favours than GOD is to grant them to us. But then he expects we should labour for them in his vineyard; he expects that the blessings we covet to receive, and he to give, we should employ our hands to earn, and stretch forth our arms to lay hold on. *Go ye into my vineyard and what shall be just I will give you*. To conclude then; That we are call'd and invited is the sole work of our gracious GOD: That we answer his call is the joint work of GOD and ourselves. This is the common sentiment of the Fathers of the church. And this will help to explain that sentence of the Apostle so generally quoted and so little understood: *GOD wills all men to be saved*. In which words, it is very observable, that the Apostle says not, *GOD wills to save all men*; but *he wills all men to be saved*. For the grace of GOD absolutely requires our co-action. Our sweats must be mingled with his precious blood; and he expects, that the innocence or penitential fervor of our lives should render efficacious the merits of his death. In short, says St. Ambrose, "*GOD wills all men to be saved*; but *that is*, if they will come to him. For he wills *not that the unwilling should be saved*; but he will's all to be saved, if they also are willing." In short, GOD will not convert his beatitude into bondage, his rewards into punishments, by forcing them upon us: And therefore makes them the matter of our own choice.

"Well, Father, cries some one, I'll not pretend to dispute with you. Let it even be as you say. I cannot be lost, without losing myself. GOD affords me grace; and it is my business to cor-

* *I salm lxxxiv.* † *Isai ii.* ‡ *Ezech. xxxvi.*
§ *Ibid. xviii.* || *Psalms cxviii.*

respond to that grace. Still must you allow, that GOD does not demean himself alike to all. Still must you grant, that he succours some more vigorously and others less. Well then may some be fervent, others languid; some virtuous, others faulty; some saved and others lost." But of what stamp must the mortal be, who reasons thus of GOD? Can it be other than some hood-wink'd heretic nursed up in vice and error? Or some wild *Indian* wrapt-up in ignorance and infidelity? Yet, O my equitable GOD, yet has't thou truths wherewith to silence even these: Nor needs there more to stop their mouths than what thou has't long since taught us by *Tertullian's* mouth: "Not one, no not one soul, among all, is without guilt, if lost; because not one was without the seeds of good in it." But how Christians, Catholic Christians, distinguish'd by thee with such Excess of mercy, wrought by thy heavenly hand with so much favorit tenderness into vessels of honour, should yet presume to accuse thee of being frugal of thy graces, is what I cannot comprehend. O Catholics! With whom has GOD dealt more liberally than with you? All of you are invited into his vineyard to earn the rewards he has prepared for you: But if one prefers the fruitless toils of vice; another the laborious inactiveness of indolence; and all, supinely careless, neglect the gracious invitation; is it the fault of grace, or not rather your own? Ah! Be then assured of this profound irrefragable truth: Every human soul is provided with sufficient means to reach the eternal blissful end for which it was created; and the sole reason, why so few are happy enough to attain to the glory which courts them, is, that they are not faithful in the use of those means: The divine grace which prevents us would be efficacious in all; if all would exert themselves to render it efficacious. It excites all alike: But not all exert themselves alike in the use of it. And therefore is it, that grace is not always so efficacious as it would be because we do not correspond to it as we should: Nay, sometimes it is totally ineffectual, because we are totally deaf to it. In a word, what St. Anselm says, is undeniably true: No man is lost, because the graces with which GOD prevents him are too weak; but because all *second* graces being justly proportion'd to a man's co-operation with the *first* which were given him, those graces never vigorously assist (nor can it be expected they should assist) any one who gives them too cool a reception. "The reason, says the saint, why a man wants grace, is not, that GOD does not give it; but that man neglects to accept it."

For the truth of all this, Beloved, let us recur to matter of fact. The prodigal son in St. Luke, at once the dupe and out-cast of vice and debauchery, after his long laborious expensive drudgery in their service,

service, when able no longer to feed their extravagance, was shamefully expell'd from their attendance, and glad to take up with the disgraceful attendance on a herd of swine: A treatment not uncommon for the world to reward it's followers with. The companions of his disgrace were meagre hunger, general penury, unprofitable want, with all the offspring of purchased poverty; and the only sauce to the husky refuse of swine, which served him for Nouriture, was shame, sorrow and fruitless remorse. In this state of miserable mendicancy did grace take it's time to rouse him from his lethargic supineness; and, darting through his soul a ray of divine light, shew'd him in one point of view all the horrors of the uncleanly sty he was humbled to, with all the lustre of the paternal palace he had wantonly exchanged for it. Then, then it was, that a salutary reflection the first-born emotion of preventing mercy, spoke to his afflicted soul: O! *How many of my Father's hirelings abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger?* Thus far was wholly the preventing work of grace. Here let us halt then a minute, for improvement's sake, and fancy to ourselves, that this prodigal youth, dejected with the misery of his situation and the baseness by which he had reduced himself to it, instead of improving this merciful prevention of Heaven with the laudable resolution, *I will rise and go to my Father*, † had on the contrary desperately rejected the very thought, as rash and likely to prove unsuccessful. Ah! Had he acted thus; would he ever have seen his Father? Would he ever have found means to be reconciled to him? Would he ever have felt the sweet effects of the revival of paternal tenderness in him? No: In all probability, never. Of what use then would the preventing grace of GOD, in such a supposition, have proved to him but to aggravate his sin with the guilt of Obduracy and to redouble his misery with additional vengeance? That he was call'd then to a reconciliation with his loving injured parent, was the sole work of forestalling mercy. That the means of his reconciliation were offer'd to his acceptance, were put into his own hands, was the gratis-gift of preventing grace. But that he used those means, that he did obtain that desirable reconciliation, was the joint work of GOD and himself, was the sweet effect of GOD's grace and his own merit.

Breathing forth menaces and slaughter, † SAUL was posting forward to *Damascus*, with no less a design than to drag, thence to *Jerusalem*, all the Christians he should meet with; that he might glut his false zeal with their blood. His body not more agitated with the velocity of his steed than his mind with the fury of his misplaced wrath, he was concerting measures, on his journey, to extirpate the very memory of the growing gospel, by laying

* *St. Luke xv.* † *Acts ix.* † *Acts ix.*

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the Ax to the root. In this cruel disposition did the all-beholding eye of the merciful JESUS behold him from the throne of his glory; and, commanding the clouds at his divine feet to descend and intercept the presumptuous rider's progress, himself step'd forth arm'd with his lightening around him, and laid the horse and the rider sprawling on the ground: Thus verifying what his servant *Jacob* prophesied: * *Be Dan a snake in the way, a serpent in the path, biting the hoofs of the horse, that his rider may fall backward.* Thus much did the sole power of grace do towards the conversion of *Saul*. It call'd him: It roused him to a sense of himself: It knocked at his breast for entrance. It was *Paul's* business then to give admittance to the divine grace; to open the eyes of his soul to the divine splendor which courted him; and to the gracious inviting expostulation of JESUS (*Saul, Saul! why persecutest thou me?* †) the least he could, in gratitude, do, was to ask, as he did, *who art thou, Lord?* And it was this prompt compliance with the preventing grace of GOD, which merited him the *Second* forewarning light convey'd to his soul in that gracious answer of Christ, *I am Jesus whom thou dost persecute.* † But let us suppose to ourselves, on the contrary, that, instead of answering the divine voice, he had taken his fall for the effect of some natural accident and the heavenly sound for the effect of a frighted disturb'd imagination; and therefore murmur'd at the former, and despised the latter: Would he, think you, in such case, have come to the knowledge of his rash mistaken zeal? No, no: He would never have obtain'd that second grace, which, new-moulding his heart, drew from him, that submissive reply: *Lord! what wilt thou have me do?* † He would never have been transformed from the persecuting *Saul*, to *Paul* the Apostle. He would never, in a word, have become, what he thenceforth was, *a vessel of election to Jesus Christ to carry his Name before the Nations and Kings, and the children of Israel.* That he was call'd to this great honour then was a liberal effect of the unmerited grace which prevented him. But that he improved that grace to the end, for which it was given to him, was the joint effect of the divine mercy and his own co-operation. To conclude, had the *Prodigal Youth* above-mention'd rejected the preventing grace first offer'd to him; had *St. Paul* turn'd a deaf ear to the converting voice of Jesus; The *Former* would probably never have been restored to the tender embraces of his Father, nor the *Latter* ever have been admitted to the bosom of his holy mother the Church, For, as the great *St. Augustin* beautifully observes, "They who are roused by preventing grace, are purposely roused, that they may act, not that they may remain inactive." In fact the men in our Gospel

* *Genesis xlix.* † *Acts ix.* † *Ibid.* § *Acts ix.*

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were not call'd to inaction: That was the fault our Redeemer blamed them for: *Why do you stand here all the day idle?* They were invited into the vineyard of the Lord: *Go ye into my vineyard.* And why, but that they might throw off their fruitless indolence and earn the premium offer'd to virtuous industry. Go and *what shall be just I will give you.*

Thus then, O dearest fellow Christians, if we should not obtain the bliss designed for us, the fault is wholly ours. GOD offers it to all: Yet not as a meer gratis-gift; but as a recompence. 'Tis our business then to earn it. Enough is it that GOD, without any previous merit in us, vouchsafes to secure it to us, by his unalterable promise, on condition of our labouring to obtain it: Enough, *I say*, to render the Almighty blameless and to make us the unjustifiable causes of our own perdition, if we should unhappily be lost. for 'tis plain, the fault could not be in GOD's refusal of the recompences promised, but in our neglect to earn them. And if we will not earn them; it is not that grace is wanting to us. But we are wanting to grace and to ourselves. With the very same graces, which are granted to you, Beloved; and, perhaps, with lesser ones, many-a-one has become a saint and a great saint too. If you then are sinners, in spite of those graces; the fault is all your own, in throwing the whole work of your salvation on GOD: Whereas, GOD insists upon your co-operating with him in that important affair; important, *I say*, to yourselves, but no otherwise of importance to him, than from the tenderness of his disinterested affection for you. GOD promised to the children of *Israel* to deliver them from the grievances they groan'd under in their *Egyptian* slavery; yet did he expect that they should co-operate with him in the work of their deliverance, by rousing themselves from their supineness, by gathering together, and by marching arm'd and in posture of defence to the *Red-Sea*. He gave them, by repeated promises in the wilderness, the land of *Canaan*, a land flowing with milk and honey; yet did he expect that they should earn it, by praying for it, by fighting for it, and by exerting every lawful industry to conquer and possess it. Thus too does he offer us the eternal possession of the kingdom of heaven. But then he warns us, that, to possess it, we must not throw the whole affair upon him; but must put something of our own. *The kingdom of heaven suffers violence.* It is by violence, then we must obtain it. We must use violence with the Devil; we must use violence with the world; we must use violence with ourselves. We must be violent in the resistance of vice; violent in the acquisition of Christian virtues; violent in the love of GOD and the pursuit of his glory. For, *The Violent*, and None but the *Violent*, seize it by

* *St. Math. xi.*

force. Rest naturally presupposes motion: And the Life-to-come was design'd for us, by our all-provident Maker, a state of everlasting Rest. The present life then must naturally be a state of incessant laborious restless motion towards it. Therefore is it, that GOD calls us all as so many industrious workmen to labour in his vineyard; that we may earn the everlasting Rest and bliss prepared for us, and may receive it from his liberal hand as a premium of our well-concerted toils. Ah why then, beloved Brethren, *why do you stand*, many of you, *all the day idle*; as if you had no business to do, or no security of being rewarded for your labours? Can you labour to a more fruitful necessary purpose than your Eternal Happiness? Can you desire a stronger security for obtaining it, if you act well, than GOD's unalterable Promise? And This you already have. *Go ye into my Vineyard*, says the Lord, *and what shall be just I will give you.* Upon the whole then, dearest Christians: Since the power is thus plainly, thus undeniably, put into our own hands to render grace more or less efficacious, by the fervor or tepidity of our correspondence; Since GOD is ready to multiply and strengthen his graces in us, in proportion to the encrease of our gratitude; is it not consequently self-evident, on one hand, that *acting well* is the certain means of securing our *Predestination* to eternal Happiness? Who then can harbour a doubt of this irrefragable Truth: That No-One will be lost who is not willing to be lost?

II. On the other hand, if through shameful indolence, we render the grace of GOD inefficacious; or if, through ungrateful perversity, we absolutely obstruct its operations; can it be denied that our *not acting well*, or our *acting ill*, is the sole cause of our Damnation to eternal Misery? Is it not plain, that our Perdition is from ourselves? For, what part in it can GOD be charged with, who, willing None to be lost, calls All Men to be saved. The divine Call, by which we are invited to Salvation, is of a two-fold nature, admirably figured in that two-fold pillar in the midst of which the Lord preceded the *Israelites* as their guide to the *Red-Sea*. It is either a thunder to awake us, or a lightning to chastise us; an attractive to allure us, or a scourge to urge us forward. All promises or threats, it is at a luminous cloud to those who follow it, to guide them on; but a pillar of fire, to such as neglect or turn from it, to spurn them forward or bring them back. When the children of *Israel* pass'd through the wilderness on their escape from the oppressions of PHARAO, *Our Lord went before them, by day, in a pillar of a cloud; and by night in a pillar of fire; that he might be the guide of their journey at both times.* * O ineffable condescendence of a be-

* *Exodus. xiii.*

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neficient God! But is he less condescending to you beloved Christians? No, no: says *Clement of Alexandria*. That cloud and fire were but emblems of the promises and threats, with which the divine grace prevents you, in order to guide you away from the oppressive yoke of *Satan* to the land of eternal plenty; "And his grace, if you obey it, is a luminous cloud to you: If you disobey it, it becomes a pillar of fire to you." Now if, when the miraculous pillar turn'd, at any time, to the right, some obstinate *Israelite* taking to the left, lost his way and perish'd in some maze of that horrible desert; had he just cause to reproach God or not rather himself? Which had he room to quarrel with, the pillar which guided him rightly, or himself, who, in defiance of his heavenly guide perversely went wrong? And can you, O beloved disciples of Christ deny, that God precedes you towards heaven, in a luminous cloud of blessed promises, or a flaming pillar of terrifying threats? What are so many inspirations, pious lectures, sermons, sacraments, good examples, and internal favours? Ah! They are all the work of directing grace, a luminous cloud to guide you to salvation. "And if you obey; they shall bring light to you." What are so many remorse of your conscience, so many bodily ailments, so many disappointments, and so many instances of divine vengeance wreak'd on unrelenting sinners? Ah! They are all the work of directing grace, a flaming pillar to fright you from damnation. And "If you do not obey, they shall fuel a fire for you." You then, O Christians, after leaving the amorous direction of God, have form'd to yourselves a thousand false smoky glimmering lights, the ill-concerted labours of your own caprice; and following these, through the confused unsafe, uncertain paths of worldly pleasures, honours and imaginary interests, you find yourselves, perhaps, bewilderd stuck-fast and on the point of being lost amidst a dark, obscure, inextricable, painful maze of lust or avarice, ambition or revenge, or all: Perversely turning from the plain track before you, you have rudely run yourselves quite out of breath into a jakes of vice and follies; and after all presume to throw the blame on God, as if he had betray'd you? Ah! believe for once *St. Jerom*: The fault is not your gracious guide's, but all your own. Blame not his light, for not directing you; but blame your sight for obstinately turning from it. "They, they, says the saint, were the rebels which revolted against the light." Or if you will not credit *St. Jerom*; believe the Eternal truth himself. *Thus say'th our Lord God: * Why have you forsaken the Lord, that He should forsake You?*

The evidence of this truth will best appear by applying it to some particular case: And the first

* 2 Chron xxiv.

which occurs to me is the reprobation of the synagogue. O miserable proscribed nation, once Mother of Sanctity, the pride of priesthood and glory of reveal'd religion! Once the elect of Heaven, the pattern of virtue, and the depositary of the Almighty's miraculous favours! Ah! What has't thou to say, now thou art sunk to the disgrace of being divorced from God, the scorn of every nation, and alive only to ignominy and slavery? What can'st thou alledge in thy behalf? Was all thy reprobation, say'st Thou, or *some Christian Mischance* for thee, was all thy reprobation owing to this: That God did not afford thee such an efficacious powerful grace, as he knew thou would'st not have fail'd of corresponding to? Ah how truly *bas iniquity given the lie to itself*. To confound this idle impious way of reasoning, I shall not here have any recourse to the refined distinction among the learned of *predestination, ante or post praevisa Merita*, or *cum praevisione* that is, *before or after or accompanying* the Almighty's foresight of our little merits or demerits. Nor shall I enter into the rugged controversy of the schools concerning efficacious grace: A subject more fit for subtilizing speculation than for practical improvement. Without all this, how easily could not I stop the mouths of the unhappily reprov'd, with the words of the incomparable *St. Augustin*. Can there be injustice in God, who demands of him, from whom he has the right to expect, and gives to whom he pleases: Who never exacts what is not due, and never gives but "where and what is due?" But we will not stop here: In what sense then. O *Jews* in particular, in what sense is God accountable for that obduracy of yours which is the cause of your perdition? Will you insist, that he did not give you those powerful graces, which you would certainly have co-operated with? Let us see then what grounds there may be for such an accusation against God. To come at some knowledge of the truth, let us imagine ourselves present at the Divine consistory, when the adorable trinity, according to our poor feeble manner of conceiving, consulted in the depth of Eternity, about the graces lights and means to be given to mankind, whereby they might be saved. Behold, methinks, God offers to you a *Carte-Blanche*, for you-yourselves to write in it what graces lights and means you wish to have. Well then, what is your pleasure? Dare you ask, that God's eternal Son should take upon him, for your sake, a body of earthly clay? That, leaving many legions of angels plunged in eternal misery, he should stretch forth his arm to draw you out of the slime of the earth to eternal felicity? That, this granted, the Divine Messiah, overlooking so many illustrious nations as fill the earth, should condescend to be born on the borders of *Jerusalem*? That, refusing alliance with the most renown'd monarchs of the world, he should

chuse to mingle his divine blood with yours? Go on, and, where it would be insolent rashness to wish that the planet of the day, should alter it's usual course and confine all it's radiance within the narrow limits of *Palestine*, do you even venture to demand, that your GOD incarnate, neglecting as it was, the world besides, vouchsafe to imprison all his mysteries, his birth, his life, his conversation, and his preaching within the districts of *Judea*. Tell me, could you have the confidence to ask all these favours, any single one of which it could be no less than presumption to expect? Ah! Behold: Before you have open'd your mouth to implore these favours, the preventing mercy of your Maker eternally subscribed to them all. But let us go on. What more can you wish-for-to ascertain your salvation, O chosen people of GOD? You need but signify it to be your wish; to induce the Son of GOD to become your Master, even to the familiar instructing you. And what more need there to make him hurry through your streets; post from town to town, from village to village; and humble his sovereign priest-hood to the very catechizing your populace, your children, your slaves? Now what farther means can be needful to your salvation? What! Would you present a memorial to the divine consistory to solicit the Father of mercy, that the divine Messiah might at every step work some miracle in your presence? It is granted.----That he should put to flight whole legions of *Devils*? It is granted.----that he should give sight to the blind; hearing to the deaf; life to the dead? It is granted.----All, All these graces are decreed you: The grant is past, a whole eternity before the memorial could be so much as devised. *What then should the Lord have done to his vine and has not done it?* * To your scanty memorial, to your defective wishes, hear, O ungrateful *Jews*, what the eternal liberality vouchsafed to subjoin! "For you shall my only-begotten open every vein; with his sacred invaluable blood shall your tribunals be dyed; with that precious liquor shall the very dirt in your streets be enobled, and every spot of your *Calvary* shall be enrich'd with it: To make way for that light which may lead you to your GOD, the sun shall withdraw its fainter beams: To open your ears to the voice of his truth, the mountains shall burst asunder, and to rouse you to a sense of gratitude, all nature shall agonize and the very dead shall come forth from their tombs, O *Jerusalem! Jerusalem! Be then converted to the Lord your GOD*; For ah! What more can you expect? I should do for you. *What more should I have done to my vine than I already have done?*" Ah what indeed, O ungrateful synagogue? When, as St. *Anselm* says, "So exuberant were the graces which the Divine Benefi-

* *Isaiab. iv.*

cence lavish'd upon you alone, that divid'd amongst the several nations of the earth they might have sufficed to sanctify them all, and reconcile them to GOD." And what fruit did those graces produce in you? Those Apostles, who, when dispersed, converted the world, could not effect the least good in you, even with all their united efforts to save you, And ah! Christ himself, that Divine Missioner, whose voice was the voice of a charmer melodiously charming and whose very looks were an omnipotent magnetic of seraphic love, what fruit did he gather among you? Alas all the fruits he could find in you were the basest ingratitude and perversity. He cured the sick among you; and you, in return, basely flew in the face of your divine physician: He raised some of you from death to life; and you, in general, sought nothing so much as his death: He wrought continual miracles of love for you; and you return'd them with continual prodigies of the blackest ingratitude to him. In a word, Christ put forth his light to conduct you to everlasting happiness; and you, shamefully *Rebels to his Light*, must needs stray aside from it to perdition. Is this then, O prescribed wretches, is this your way of willing, to be saved? Is it thus you would use the means to eternal glory? Is it on these terms you wish to be chosen: To have the Priesthood, and to disgrace it with Simony; to have temples, that you may pollute them with blood; to receive Christ, that you may nail him to the cross; and to listen to his Apostles, only to devise a plausible plea to stone them to death?

Ah, beloved audience! Who are they who thus complain of not being predestinate? Shall such a race presume to arraign the Divine Justice, and to accuse GOD of partiality? And for what? "Because forsooth they have not received certain graces which they certainly would have co-operated with?" O generation of vipers! For what grace would you have exchanged the author of all grace? To what call would you have answer'd courteously, if you answer'd the call of your meek and humble Saviour with injurious language and volleys of stones? But I have nothing more to say: I have done. Judge you, O Christians, between GOD and this favour'd nation. What injury did he do this people in reproving them; unless it be thought an injury done them, that a separate more horrible hell was not created for them? What more could they expect GOD to do; unless they wanted, not only the eternal Son of GOD, but even the Father and Holy Ghost, to be incarnate among them; that they might make both *Tabor* and *Olivet* vie with mount *Calvary*, and have it to vaunt, that they had crucified the whole adorable Trinity. But GOD (base as they were) still loved them too well, to do more than he did: And therefore refused to multiply his

graces

graces to them any farther; that he might not be constrain'd to multiply his vengeance.

O Christians ever dear to me! Let not these words be wholly lost to you, in a fruitless application of them to the *Jews*. No, no: Believe me: Too home will they sting us, if we but dare to apply them to ourselves. Little will it avail us, every-one, to wash our hands and say with *Pilate*, (because we lived not in the deicidic age when *Jesus* bled) *I am innocent of the blood of this just man*: * Little, *I say*, will it avail us, if, with that wicked judge, we sentence *Jesus* to death by our crimes, and crucify him spiritually in the *Calvary* of our hearts. And, alas, can we all thoroughly clear ourselves of this; Ah! Can the words of *St. Anselm* wound the *Jews* more to the quick than they would sting ourselves, if seriously applied to us; "So exuberant have been the graces which the Divine Benificence has lavish'd upon you alone, O *Catholics*, that, divided among the several nations of the earth, they might have sufficed to sanctify them all and reconcile them to God." Let but every-one of you cast an eye of reflection on the infinit benefits you have severally received of God: Do but reckon the almost infinit number of pious volumes, the easy access to the holy sacraments, the frequency of sermons, exhortations and other pious spurs to perfection. Ah! how many able and zealous preachers have been sent to excite you to work in the vineyard of the Lord, by their doctrin? How many religious men have been dispatch'd to you to wean you from the world by their example? How many priests to reconcile you to God? How many festivals are celebrated to inflame you with the spirit of fervor, by the example of the saints? How many indulgences are granted you, to confirm you in the grace of the Lord of saints? And would it be any exaggeration to say: How many have become eminent saints by one single means of all these? And yet shall all these not suffice to convert one perverse sinner in this hardened age. To convert a *St. Paul* from a persecutor to an apostle, one voice of *Christ* sufficed: And yet now-o'-days his whole gospel is too little. To change a *St. Anthony* from a gay worldling to a holy hermit, one sermon proved effectual: When *Egypt* saw a second *Magdalen* transform'd from a loose sinner to a rigid saint, one inward inspiration did the work: And shall all the plenty of gospels, lessons, sermons, and inspirations, which you, O *Catholics*, are daily favour'd with, but serve to leave you in a worse condition than they found you in before? O ever gracious God! What strange insatiation holds us in these our days. A *St. Francis Xavierius*, a *St. Augustin* of England, and other holy missionaries, wafted by a heavenly zeal across the ocean, have singly subjected whole provinces,

* *St. Matb. xxvii.*

whole kingdoms, to the laws of *Christ*; and led them to eternal bliss: And now shall so many venerable priests, so many religious men, and learned preachers, launch from the sweet serenity, the blest tranquillity enjoy'd in holy cloisters, into *Perils of waters, perils of thieves perils of their nation, perils of Infidels, perils in the city, perils in the desert, perils in the sea*, PERILS FROM FALSE BRETHREN: * Shall they *I say*, launch into every peril to administer to you every means of salvation; and yet all be insufficient to conduct to God one little flock of you already in the centre of his church! Ah surely the prophecy must be too fatally verified in you: Surely *You are rebels to the Light*: Surely, of you and to you it may be justly said: "So exuberant have been the graces which the divine benificence has lavish'd upon you alone; that, divided among the several nations of the world, they might have sufficed to sanctify the universe and reconcile the whole to God."

Go then and murmur at the divine severity, and charge your maker with the partiality he is a stranger to. But ah! how loudly must not your consciences belie your impious sentiments, should you do thus. Say rather: If you should (which Heaven avert!) unhappily be damn'd; on whom can you throw the guilt of your perdition, but on yourselves? To what can you impute your reprobation? To the want of graces? No: But to your own neglect of co-operating with them. Not God was wanting to you, not his light or grace. Yourself alone, *Rebels to his Light*, were wanting to God, to grace and to yourselves. So very plain is it that *acting well* is the infallible only means of ascertaining our predestination to eternal happiness, and that *acting ill or not acting well*, is the sure cause of damnation to eternal misery. What wonder then is it, that, all being call'd to salvation, and scarcely any answering that call: That all being invited without exception to labour in God's vineyard, and so great a majority preferring a fruitless destructive indolence to the eternal recompences promised to their toils: What wonder, *I say*, is it, that, out of the many thus call'd, the chosen should be so few? O that Christians then would but accompany their discourses of predestination (so subtil, so tedious, so unfruitful) with a little promise active serious practice! O that, instead of daily examining what God must think of us, we would but in good earnest examin what we ought to think of ourselves! O that, tired of carrying such a tumultuous multitude of speculations quite up to Heaven, we would but with sober eagerness study how to lift our souls thither, by the purity of our manners upon earth! Did we thus much; we might possibly be less acquainted at present with the mystery of our election to glory: But we should render our

* *2. Cor. xii.*

glory more certain. Grown happily less curious, we should be more in peace; and, become less learned, we should find ourselves more holy. Day after day is consumed, is wasted, in words; but action is all-the-while neglected. Daily are our thoughts led astray after *What we shall be*; but never after *What we are* and *what we ought to be*. Our hearts are perpetually palpitating about the decrees, which God made, from all eternity, with regard to us: And we wholly overlook those works we ought to practice, in time; that we may not have just cause to palpitate at hearing the sentence with which he shall put an end to time. In a word, beloved souls, we live (if it can be call'd living) with our whole spirit buried in ages to come: while, in the mean time, the present is neglected and nothing can be in a worse state than our poor slighted souls. Ah Christians! For pity's sake then, a little less subtilty of thought and a little more action. None are lost who are not willing to be lost. Is not that an encouragement sufficient to urge us on in the work of our salvation? *Acting well* is the infallible means of ascertaining our predestination to eternal happiness. Yes: O happy souls, who, safe out of the gulf, are landed in the harbour of eternal felicity! You know it. You, dissolved with the divine love which enflamed your breasts, now know the infinit value of the glorious recompences promised to your little toils. And O what extatic joy must not your blifs be heightened with, by the eternally pleasing reflection on the trifling labours with which you earn'd it. And if *acting ill, or not acting well*, is, as it has been

plainly proyed, the sure cause of damnation; what must not your anguish be, O proscribed souls, who now too sadly know it. O hapless reprobates! Fuel of the divine vengeance! How certainly do you know, to your irremediable grief, that yourselves are the causes of your unutterable woe! O the exquisite pangs of that bitter bitter remorse perpetually reminding you of the God you have lost, and lost for ever, and lost through your own perverse folly in not co-operating with his grace while in your own hands! O Christians! What then are you about in this life? Why do you stand here all the day idle? Ah! *Goe ye into the vineyard of the Lord: and what shall be just he will give you*. If your labour be attended with a little temporal suffering; your suffering will be generously rewarded with an eternal crown of glory. And remember what the Apostle tells you: * *The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the future glory which shall be revealed in us*. And since as your blessed Saviour warns you, that, through the perversity of numbers, *Many are call'd; but few are chosen*: Be you of the happy few who shall be chosen as well as call'd, by laying hold of that predestination which is yours for earning it. Earn it then with assiduity in good-works: Be faithful to the divine grace, and it shall improve in you. In a word, be faithful to God, and God will be faithful to you; and will not only augment and confirm your grace in this world, but ascertain your glory in the next. Which I beseech God, &c. *In the name, &c.*

* *Romans viii.*

S E R M O N

On SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY.

St. LUKE viii. 5, 6, 7, 8, 11.

The sower went forth to sow his seed: And, while he soweth, some fell by the way-side, and was trodden upon Some fell upon the rock; and, being shot up, wither'd Other some fell among thorns; and the thorns, grown up with, choak'd it: and other some fell upon good ground; and, being shot up, yielded fruit an hundred-fold The seed is the word of God.

A Christian audience entertain'd with Christian sermons and not saints! Is it possible? Frequently nourish'd with Catholic doctrines and not vigorous in Catholic piety! Can it be credible? Every week regaled with the substantial aliment of the word of God, and yet wasting in a consumption of *beatbenish* vices; nay fainting under a slavish subjection to Satan! Who could believe it of any of you, Christians; if melancholy experience did not force our assent? Surely, Beloved, your souls must be strangely disorder'd, to receive this

spiritual

spiritual nourishment so often as you do, and yet to grow daily more faint in the virtues of a Christian; if not more infected with a complication of vices unbecoming a Christian. Had you not the benefit of public prayers so often as you have; had you not in your monthly devotions the *bread of Life* from Heaven, to strengthen and refresh you in the pursuit of perfection; I should still expect to see you improve in sanctity, by the sole assistance of the word of God which you hear so often. For *not in bread alone, JESUS CHRIST is my author, * not in bread alone doth man live, but in every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God.* If then the word of God is alone capable of giving life to the soul, and of strengthening it much more than corporal food can fortify the body; how comes it that you, who are supplied with both, are so languid in the spirit, and so vigorous in the flesh? If it be a matter of faith taught us by the son of God, that man liveth by *every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God*; whence comes it that, while your anxiety to feed and care for the body daily encreases and refines, the desire of feeding and enlivening your souls grows fainter and fainter? Ah Beloved! the cause of this inconsistency is too unseemly and shameful to unfold without giving you disgust. And yet, can you conceive, that, if Christians had as much at heart the love of their immortal souls as that of their corruptible carcases, they would go to sermons with so much frowardness? Would they hear 'em with so much weariness? Would they, think you, require in a rigid conciseness so many palatable ingredients, pleasing conceits, and rhetorical turns? would they, in a word, bring with them to the house of God, their spirits dissipated by vanity and absence of thought, and come with every design but that of benefiting by what they hear? Strange inconsistency! Preachers, before they approach to the altar or chair, must exhaust the flower of their spirits in study and reflection; and, before they begin their discourse, must dissolve their souls in sighs and implore on their knees the assistance of the Holy Ghost to debit to you the life-giving food of the word of God; and shall their audience have no pains to take to receive that food, to digest it, and to transform it into their own substance? to speak the truth frankly, Christians: When I have seriously reflected on the sermons frequently preach'd by abler divines than myself, and even on the many which I, the shadow of them all, have preach'd, to you, and the little fruit which they have hitherto produced; I have scarce been able to refrain deploring with tears, the little success of this divine food. When I consider what my Saviour assures me of, that, *The seed of grace, which is the*

* *St. Matth. iv.*

word of God, when sown in good ground, that is, in a good heart, which receives and retains it, yieldeth fruit an hundred fold; and yet, that, through your own fault, instead of supplying you with spiritual vigour, it tends now-o'-days only to create in you corrupt humours; I could almost conjure you, O Catholics, never to frequent evangelical sermons: As, through the corrupt use you too often make of them, they but render your vices inexcusable and your very lukewarmness perversity. But as this might be too desperate an advice to give to Christians who have some good at heart, and are desirous to be better inform'd for the future; I shall rather chuse the more moderate remedy of discovering to you the true cause, why the word of God is of so little fruit to many of you. Christians are under *three grand mistakes*, which are the joint cause of this evil, I have hitherto been speaking of.

- I. The *first* mistake relates to the preacher who speaks,
- II. The *second* to the divine word which is spoken, *And*
- III. The *third* to yourselves who hear it.

These THREE MISTAKES shall form the argument and division of this subject: And, if I should be so happy as to shew them to you in the same light, they appear-in to me; I am in hopes, the sermons you may hereafter hear from me, as well as those which you may with much greater fruit hear from others, will make a greater impression on you than any you have hitherto heard have yet done.

“Descend then, spirit divine, descend in mercy to this audience, and dwell upon my lips: Give me thy lowly instrument, for their loved sakes, the flaming tongue of a persuasive wisdom, to disperse the clouds of error which stand between their souls and thy enlivening truth.”

I. In a subject of importance, like this we are upon, every instant is precious: and therefore I shall immediately come to the argument. The *first* mistake, which robs Christians of the benefit of the word of God, is that which presents a preacher to their imagination as a man of the common stamp; and, shutting their eyes to the excellence he invests with the greatness of his dignity, shews to them only that lump of clay which is the miserable inheritance of every son of Adam. A Mistake this of very fatal consequence: For if the force of every doctrine is taken from the authority of the person who utters it; what efficacy can the words of eternal life have in the mouth of a discredited Apostle?

But

But give me leave, brethren, to recall you from an idea so injurious to the excellence of the Apostolic Function of every divine preacher. You cannot deny, in the first place, that every lawful and approved preacher is an ambassador of GOD. He who spoke in the *Old Law*, by the mouths of the prophets; he who spoke, in the *New*, by the sacred tongue of Christ, and the voice of the Apostles after his death, now speaks by ours. By him are we chosen to publish his laws: By him are we commission'd to promise his rewards: And by him are we sent to threaten his punishments. In his name then we come, and him we represent. Take his own divine word for it, if you will not take mine: *He who bears you bears me, and he who despises you despises me.* * Now: Who so ignorant as not to know the regard due to the ambassador of a prince, whatever be his personal merit or demerit? No respect is thought too much to pay him as such, and every disrespect is of an unpardonable nature: Inasmuch that sovereigns, who shall even put-up-with an injury done to themselves in person, think no resentment too great for an insult offer'd to one of their ministers.

The Royal *David* was insulted, by *Semei*, with opprobrious language and a volley of stones: And with what outward serenity of countenance and inward peace of mind did he not bear it? Yet with what indignation did he not resent the ill-treatment, which his ambassadors received from the King of the *Moabites*? Nothing less could appease his anger than the sending the whole armed powers of *Israel*; with *Joab* at their head, to punish him. Nay nor even that: he goes himself in person to battle; engages in fight with him and five other princes his allies; nor thinks the injury repair'd, till he has wiped-off the guilty affront with the blood of no less than forty-thousand of the troops. We also, beloved auditors, we also are ministers from GOD, the great king of kings, to you. Yes, says St. PAUL; † *For Christ we are ambassadors.* Behold the ensigns which adorn us; the livery by which we are distinguish'd! Whence do we receive the authority to wear his surplice, his stole? Who invests us with the doctrines of the gospel? Is it not thou, my GOD, who givest us the mouth, and the doctrines which fill it? Yes, Christians, yes he has promised so to do: ‡ *I will give you,* says he, *both a mouth and wisdom.* It is not then, Christians, our wretched condition of sinners you ought to regard, but the excellence of our office and the importance of affairs, which to our confusion and terror, we are sent to transact. O that one ray of

lively faith would but disperse the clouds which intercept our heavenly country from our views! What rich hopes should we not see the angels conceal'd in every accent utter'd by each tongue which preaches the saving truths of Christ; if not in the feeble manner I may do, at least with the sacred fervor of other orthodox preachers, skill'd in the work of crowding Heaven with citizens?

But here, Beloved, with your leave let us halt a while. If we are the ambassadors of JESUS CHRIST; if, by his promise, we inherit his doctrine, nay his language; if we are appointed, by him, to sow the eternal seeds of truth and sanctity in your hearts, that you may grow-up and be worth transplanting into paradise; and you mean time mistake us for quite the reverse; how comes it that you resolve to idle away so much time as to come to hear us? Do you expect to hear from us declamations of the bar, or the rants of a comedian? Are we to stand at the altar, to entertain the idleness of every do-nothing, who comes hither only to fill-up an empty hour which hangs heavy upon him? or to flatter the ears of some curious impertinent, who, at the preacher's expence of salvation, would learn to turn a phrase? Should we, in this, answer your wishes; what could you compare us to so justly, as to those stupified workmen of *Noah*, who, after labouring an ark, for others to save themselves in from the floods of the deluge, abandon'd themselves to the general wreck? Yet thus alone can we hope to please you. But alas what evil do we do you, that you should will us so much practical hatred? If we seek to send you to *Paradise*; why will you needs seek to send us into *Hell*? And thither you must want us to go; if nothing less will serve your turn than that we flatter your vices, instead of reproving them; and tickle your ears, instead of converting your hearts. Now this is all which some of you would have us do; and for want of this, you are tired with hearing us. You, women! If we tell you your faults; how soon are you up in arms against us? "We want, *you cry*, to strengthen the hands of tyranny, and to teach the men (who are already but too apt to magnify your failings) to improve their oppression of you." And you, O men! If we inveigh against your irregularities and vices; what fruit do you draw from it but the most ungenerous inferences? Instead of reflecting, that, were you less vicious, we must be more sparing of invectives; "'Tis to please the women, *you cry*, and not to mend us. These preachers are all ways sure to come-off well with them." As if the dignity of us priests did not happily lift us as much above the smiles of one sex as the frowns of the other.---But your whole conduct is all of a piece. If we preach up penance to you; it is laying

* St. Luke x.

† 2 Cor. v.

‡ St. Luke xxi.

ing a burden upon your shoulders which we would not touch with a finger: If we recommend virtue to you; 'tis hypocrisy: If we decry sin; it is false zeal: If we preach-up Heaven; it is for love of interest: If we talk to you of the terrors of *Hell* and your danger of falling into it; we are hard-mouth'd, we are cruel, and want to drive you to despair. Ungenerous Christians! If such were our motives; if preachers were so mean as you paint them to yourselves; they were monsters not men: They would not be preachers but Fiends: And instead of listening to them with patience at the altar, you ought to banish them from it, or to flee from them as from *Serpents* or *Devils*. Consider then but a little, and you will see your mistake. What are we sent to you for, but to reprove you out of evil, to point-out to you the paths of virtue, and to allure you to eternal felicity? What interest is it of ours, whether you are virtuous or vicious. When we have done sermon; our condition is the same whether you have minded it or not. And if the difference be any; we should fare but the better, in this life, would we but flatter your senses and soothe your passions. All the interest then we can have, is, by promoting your salvation, to secure our own. If therefore we waste our lungs and intellects, to make you happy for-ever; why will you wish us miserable? And miserable you must want us to be, if, to humour your corrupt taste, we must prostitute the dignity of our office; and, to amuse your imagination, we must neglect the faithful discharge of our ministry which ought to aim chiefly at bettering your lives. Ah! for pity to us then, if you have none for yourselves, leave us to the duty of preaching, and oblige us not to patch-up declamations. Leave us to appear and speak like what we are; and never wish us to entertain you with gay illusions, and frothy descriptions.

II. "Ah! *you'll say*, We go to sermons, to hear sermons, and not to be entertain'd with rehearals. We have all the veneration which is due to the ministry of the Gospel; and are not insensible of the lively impress which the maxims of eternity are apt to make on the heart of man, when deliver'd with zeal. But then there can be no harm in requiring, in the word of God, a little complaisance and address. Did *Judith* behold *Holofernes* the less for being adorn'd? On the contrary: It was the brilliancy of her dress which assisted her to do it. Did not *David* chase the evil spirit out of *Saul*, by the harmony of his harp? Why may not vice be destroy'd by rhetorical flowers as well as *Helioabalus* could suffocate his courtiers with roses? Nay flowers are necessary where *JESUS* is talk'd of: Who, taking on him the title of *Nazarite*, would bear them in his very name. Where the senses are invited,

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"in concert with reason; where pleasure as well as piety allures; thither the greater crouds will cheerfully flock." But pardon me, loving auditors: This is the *second* grand mistake, which robs so many of you of the benefit of the word of God. A mistake so much more dangerous than the former, as the divine word itself is infinitely more important than the orator who preaches it.

According to you then the word of God, given on purpose to nourish virtue which daily decreases in strength, shall confine itself to the limits of human curiosity? It must leave the heart in a deceitful repose, to attend wholly to gratify the depravity of the ear? Instead of displaying to you your disorderly conduct, instead of removing the errors which clog your understanding, instead of conquering the corruption which preys on your will, it must be wholly taken-up in a certain mechanic composition of words, which may lead your memory after it in an ignoble triumph void of any fruit. Such to a tittle was the corrupt taste of those Absentees to themselves, who murmur'd against *Isaiab*.

"This man, *they were wont to exclaim*, this man has nothing to say but vehemence and terrors: His accents are thunder and his words all invectives. Away with him and all his noise, away with him far from us; let him thunder his terrors to the trees of the forest. *Let this holy one of Israel cease from our face*. Or if he must talk; let him talk with good-manners, and we will give him the hearing. We are men and not stocks or stones; we are to be persuaded by complaisance but not to be stunn'd with the loudness of threats. Speak then, *Isaiab*, but speak to us pleasing things."

But what, *says the Lord*, is man to give laws to my word? Go, *Isaiab*, and write against these the sentence of death: And, that it may outlive the waste of time, in witness of my wrath, let the horror of their punishments be written in indelible characters, write it therefore on *box*. This haughty people shall be reduced even below contempt. *It shall be broken small, as the potters vessel is broken with mighty breaking; and there shall not be of it's fragments a sherd to be found.* Shall I tell you, Beloved, the emotion this terrible menace excites in me? Formerly I used to tremble only for my own safety, as a preacher: But this obliges me even to shudder for yours. If an *Ezekiel* was made accountable for the blood of the people, *if thou warn not the wicked to return from his wickedness and live; his blood will I require at thy hands*; † if a *St. Paul* at his departure from *Mileto*, at the peril of his life, placed his chief consolation in being able to say, with truth to the *Ephesians*, *I call you to witness, that I am clean from the blood of you all. For I have not spared to declare to you*

Isaiab xxx.

† Ezek. iii.

P

all

all the counsel of God; † if every preacher must deter his flock from vice, allure it to virtue, and labour to save it, or prepare to perish with it; what must become of thee, my soul, if I should neglect this important duty? So many precious souls then have I to account-for? Is it not enough that I watch over my own; but I must answer for the blood of every one in this audience, who shall perish through my inadvertence? O tremble, my heart, tremble; and let a holy fear prevent thy perishing eternally by flattering or neglecting any one of them. But if the preacher has so much room for apprehension; whence comes it that every hearer is in such perfect tranquility, at the terrible sentence pronounced against the audience of *Isaiah*? If I and every minister of God's word, have cause to fear, whenever we pronounce that sacred word any otherwise than God directs; surely Catholics have a stout heart, or rather surely they have no heart at all; if they tremble not, at the hearing the word of God without the dispositions he requires them to hear it with, or if they presume to seek it, where and how he forbids them to expect it: And what just cause to tremble have not such persons as leave those preachers of the gospel, who adhere to the humble maxims of their crucified master; pay their court to a retailer of words, and give up their time and attention often-times to one, who preferring jingle to gospel-piety, can metamorphose a *Calvary* into a *Parnassus*? What are they doing, who, for the sake of diction, prefer a *Dr. Taylor* to a *Goiber*; a *Tillotson* to a *Dorrel*? What, I say, are they doing but copying after the perversity of *Isaiah's* hearers, and saying to their preachers, *Speak pleasing things to us, see errors to us?*

Perhaps you will tell me, that the word of God is no longer so stern as it was heretofore; Sermons have now some recourse to rhetoric; and sacred orators are not so rigid as they have been: I will grant you, they are not; and why, but because you will not suffer them to be so? Yet I cannot possibly find any private interest worth their pursuing, in gilding-over your miseries and throwing a veil on your woes. That some may err thus, and I inadvertently as well as they, is not impossible. But then I must observe to you, that yours is all the guilt of all the faults we commit in preaching. You would have us new-vamp the prophets, perfume the apostles, force the ancient of days to conform his words to the fashions of place and time: In short, to use the emphasis of the apostle, you would have us prostitute the gospel to the mode; the Holy Ghost is never thought polite in our mouths, if not conformable to your language; and nothing less can gratify you than our introducing into the Church a dissolute university stile so opposit to the majestic ancient language, which, in the mouths of the apo-

† *Act. xx.*

stles, triumph'd over the forum and capital of *Rome*, and lower'd that head of a proud world, which, for four thousand years, had strongly entrench'd itself against all the powers of truth. Would you be but less lavish of your applause on the *Tillotsons* of the age, and pay more regard to the solidity of Catholic morals, than to the frothy eloquence of such balancers of syllables; and sycophants of the ear; Would you leave such to listen to themselves as pay more regard, in their discourses, to man than to God; believe me, you would fire the zeal of preachers with a laudible ambition; Most of them would improve their piety, by promoting yours; and the rest would be even useful to you, at least out of vanity. Whereas while you traverse all they say, misapply all they mean, and criticize both their words and their utterance; charge their zeal with rusticity, their fortitude with indiscretion, their gravity with stupidity, and their devotion with enthusiasm; yours is all the guilt of their connivance: And you will be accountable to God for having almost reduced them to imitate that scandal of monarchs and monster of *Rome*, the inhuman *Nero*; who, after setting the august capital of the world in flames, danced to the sound of the people's distress, and accompanied their cries with a tune on his lyre.

III. Unless you suffer me, Christians, to speak plain *English*, 'twill be in vain to come to the *third Mistake* which relates intirely to yourselves. The vanity of a preacher, or the inversion of the word of God, or both, may be partly the cause why Christians reap so little benefit from that word of God: But they cannot be the whole. Every preacher, however affected, every discourse, however gaudy it might be, would make some impression on the heart; if every hearer brought with him a heart to the Sermon. But ah my God! How many, before they come hither, either leave their hearts wholly behind them, or bring them but by halves. And the reason why a sermon seldom goes out of Church with the audience, is that which *Pbilo* gives, they bring their ears to the altar without their attention: No wonder therefore that, when they hear, the devil should come and take the word out of their mouth, lest believing they be saved. No wonder, that the word of God, like the seed which fell upon the rocks, should be joyfully received by, and yet not profit, some for want of time to take root. No wonder, in a word, that falling, like the parabolic seed of this gospel, into thorns, it should be choak'd-up with cares and riches and pleasures of this life and should not render fruit: When the persons which make-up almost every Christian audience, are either without Christian hearts, or, at least, with hearts wholly over-run with sollicitude, avarice, or luxury, or all.

Attend

Attend for a minute, to a surprising discourse between God and his prophet *Ezekiel*. * *Ezekiel*, says the Lord, this people whether taking the air abroad, or conversing at-home, are frequently talking of thee. *Son of man the children of thy people speak of thee by the walls and in the doors of their houses.* Of me, Lord! What can they find worth talking of me? "Why they invite one-another to hear thee. Come let us go to the Sermon, and hear what fine things this man has to say. Come and let us hear what is the word which proceedeth from the mouth of the Lord." † They flock to the Church and often in a hurry and in crowds. Poor mistaken preacher! Because you see a thick array of moving figures, you imagin you have a crouded audience. No, no, the Church is either empty or only fill'd with a croud of mere *Corfes*: They listen but in appearance as statues might do. If you can but divert them; you will set the machines in motion, the things will have life, and the genius to listen: But if you attempt to convert them, you'll lose all your labour; for they have brought no heart with them to convert. They have all left them behind: The men in their amours, or intrigues, their projects or appointments; and the women in their vanities, their whims, and their important nothings. To guess by their looks you would think they soberly design'd coming to Church, but in truth, the least they bring with them into Church is themselves. *They come to thee*, says the Lord, *as if a people should go in.* ‡ And yet *Ezechiel* they give thee the hearing, but with no farther intent than to give thee the hearing; careful enough never to think more of what thou say'st, for fear of being allured to the practice. *My people sit before thee, and they hear thy words and do them not.* § The whole ends in a barbarous anatomy of what they have heard, in babbling out a tedious set of Sermons over one, and in preaching the preacher all over the town. And *thou art to them as a musical song.* || Now from such an audience judge what fruit you are to expect? From such premisses draw yourself the conclusion. They go out of Church with all the vices they brought, immodest, unjust, dissolute, revengful, proud and covetous as they came into it, and *their heart*, says the Lord, *followeth their avarice.* ** Hitherto we have heard God talking to his prophet. And whether any part of this be applicable to You, yourselves must decide. Examin your own souls, or if that be too troublesome a task for you, let me make a scrutiny of the common method of living alas, in this age, the very outlines of primitive christianity seem almost ef-

* *Ezek. xxxiii.* † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.* § *Ibid.* || *Ibid.* ** *Ibid.*

faced. What do we see in marriages but confusionⁿ and indecencies? What amongst the youth, but corruption? And what in almost in every family but disorder? Deceit is the director of commerce, lukewarmness is the substitute of devotion, and fraud holds the ballance of justice. Yet so many Sermons heard is it possible? Yes too possible not to be fact, and why? No sooner has the sound of the divine word tingled on the ears of the audience than it evaporates in dissipation. It is like the seed which, *fell by the way-side . . . They hear and forget . . .* Because the devil, by the power they give him over them, *cometh and taketh the word out of their heart, lest believing they be saved.* * Let us turn our eyes whither-ever we will, what can we meet with but offences against an injured God, the precious blood of Christ neglected if not contemn'd; and a croud of souls hurrying at a break-neck pace to perdition.

And how shall the word of God work any good effects upon souls as it is generally prophaned and travestied almost in every pulpit in this nation, and as it is heard by almost every audience? What view does the intruding preacher mount with, but to attract the eyes and amuse the ears of his assembly? And what end do his hearers propose, but the gratification of their different passions? One goes to Sermons, to gather roses and violets from the accents of a smooth-tongued orator: Another, to pass an idle hour till dinner be ready: A third, to gaze on some living image of the Creator, all lovely perhaps in appearance, all disfigured within: And others again, to make head against the preacher, with the example of vices he is labouring to decry. Such, such are they, in whose hearts of rock the seed of God's holy word can fix no roots. But is this a fit disposition for a Catholic preacher or audience? However it may be consistent in a heretic assembly; 'tis an indignity in such a sacred One as I mean to speak-to. No, no: Nothing but the pure word of God ought to engross your preacher's pursuits, and nothing else ought ever to engage your attention. But how shall the Divine Word have any impression in your hearts; if, scarce heard, you choak the sentiments you have conceived, in the thorny dissipation of worldly pleasures or affairs? "Man, says St. *Damian*, labours in vain in preaching to men; if the hearers takes no pains to listen to the voice of God within him." My God! How shall the voice of thy ministers bear head against so many idle discourses, so many impertinent jokes, so many double entendres, which Christians now-a-days blush not to draw from the very maxims of the gospel; to the promotion of worldly attachment, to the apathy of devotion, and perhaps to the ridicule and contempt of the very maxims themselves? Ah Christians! if the first fruit of a Sermon be not to wean you from this false vain and

St. *Luce viii.*

delusive world; if the first fruit of the Divine Word, be not to stifle your dangerous jokes and amusements, to break-off your criminal friendships, and alienate you from dissolute company and conversations, in vain do you come hither: You are mispending your time in listening to us; and might make better use of it by staying at home. "In vain do we preach to you, and better might we employ our time in silence, as *St. Ambrose says*, than in dealing-out the sacred mysteries of the Divine Word." To what purpose shall the blood of our Redeemer flow from the mouth of his ministers, once a week; if it is daily shed, with contempt, by the neglect of the hearers? To what purpose shall he sow the seeds of his Holy Word, by means of his ministers, in the hearts of the faithful; if they, who hear it, go their ways, and suffer that holy Word, like *the seed sown among thorns*, to be choked-up with cares, and riches, and pleasures of this life without rendering fruit.

Ah Christians! Study to be such. Permit and encourage us to preach as becomes the ministers of God's Word, by your listening like Christians. Force us to preach with catholic unction, by your attending with catholic devotion. Do this and you will render the Word of God fruitful indeed. Here that Word, and retain it in a good, a very good heart; and, like *the seed which fell on good ground it will yield fruit an hundred fold*. Here, says the Lord, to the audience of *Isaiah* and to you, *bear and your souls shall live*. * Hear then and remove the *three mistakes* I have hitherto discover'd. If you hear and suffer yourselves to be won-over to Perfection; you may hope for an eternal Reward: But if you hear and are froward to yield; you will have reason to fear the eternal judgment. "When the holy Scripture, says *St. Augustin*, and the doctrines of justice are debited from the Altar, or Pulpit to the public; they, who hear and practice, hear to their reward: But they, who hear and neglect to do, hear to their condemnation."

So let man esteem us, says *St. Paul*, as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God. And here the Apostle recommends to us the deporting ourselves, in the dispensation of those mysteries, so as to deserve the being reputed what we are. How unseemingly must it not be in a preacher surrounded with the ensigns of devotion, with the semblance of the martyrs and other glorious saints, with the crucifix the sacraments and mysteries of sanctity, to begin his discourse from the Altar, or sacred chair with the adorable words of the Gospel, and carry it on in a manner which would raise a blush in the graver part of *beaten* poets or *pagan* philosophers? And yet how few are there innocent of this? How few the orthodox preachers in this nation? How few the faithful dispensers of the word?

* *Isaiah* lv.

Scarce are there to be found a few who deal it out in truth and piety. And we may truly say of *England* what *St. Paul* said, of *Corinth*. Here is now wanted, among the dispensers that a man be found faithful.

Alas what a dread inundation of vices drowns the people of this nation, and how few are the catholics who are not sinking in the common wreck! What sex, what age, what profession is exempt from the general catastrophe! How few are they, who, safe within the ark, keep their fidelity unfulfilled! If masters are dissolute; their servants outstrip them. If parents give bad example to their children: These improve upon the vices of their parents. The youth, perhaps, are not covetous: But then they are lascivious and extravagant. If old age is not wanton; is it not covetous and hard-hearted? They, who resist revenge, give a loose to luxury; and they, who murder not their enemies with a knife, make no scruple of butchering the reputation of an inoffensive neighbour with the tongue. In short, mankind, if they are industrious are indeavour, if not impious. And the generality of womankind, if they have some tenderness of devotion, have full as much delicacy, giddiness and vanity. O what a deluge is this, which immerses all the virtues of Christianity at once! O what a multiplicity of thorns to choak the word of God! Can it then be supportable in a preacher, amidst such universal distress, like an effeminate *Ovid* in his account of the deluge, to play with the miseries of nature in gaudy descriptions and rhetorical flights? Can this be a proper way to lead in safety to the Ark so many souls upon the point of perishing? If man is to live by the word which proceedeth from the mouth of God; what a barbarous treachery would it not be, in us, to lead you to death, by substituting human eloquence in our discourses, in the stead of that word? You must excuse me then, beloved; if, following the advice of *St. Augustin*, and "treating pernicious curiosity with contempt, I resolve to seek the true God in the piety of truth:" If despising all human respects, I apply wholly to the promoting, in your salvation, my own. *He who has my word, let him utter my word faithfully*. * It is God who commands both *Jeremiah* and us so to do. And surely you would not have us perish for refusing to obey him. Your souls are all dear to us as our own. We struggle to lead and go with you hand and hand into Heaven. Who then is there here so cruel, among you, who would wish to precipitate us into Hell, by awaking in us a pride which is imparted in the nature of all men, and too wakeful in itself; and, by meanly spiring us up to the vain desire of flattering or being flatter'd?

However it is not enough, for your benefit, that

Jerem. xxiii.

we,

we, on our sides, apply remedies to your evils: You must compleat the work on your side. And what remedy ought you to apply, but a serious attention to and digestion of those doctrines and maxims which may persuade you to mend your lives and manners? To give light to a room, it is not sufficient to strike a few sparks of fire from a flint: You must add aliment to the sparks. To nourish your bodies, it is not enough to receive the food in your mouths: You must chew it and concoct it. Many do by sacred sermons what *Balthassar* did by the prediction of *Daniel*. This unthinking monarch, amidst the riotous gaiety of a sumptuous entertainment, is suddenly shock'd at an unintelligible sentence written on the wall by an invisible hand. And *Daniel* is instantly sent for to interpret the mysterious cypher. "*Number, weight and measure, O King (says Daniel) is the interpretation. God hath number'd thy Kingdom and hath finish'd it: thou art weigh'd in the balance and found having less weight than thou should'st have: Thy Kingdom is divided and is given to the Medes and the Persians.*" Who would not imagin that such a warning should have alarm'd him? Who would have expected less than to hear him order the City to be double-guarded with centinels: His palace to be secured with a stronger power, and scouts to be sent-out to watch the approaches of the enemy. But not at all: He is not so much as moved for his own safety: But idly amuses himself with giving minute directions for the adorning of *Daniel*, who had already declared his contempt for those ornaments. O what a lively picture this of what passes among Christians in this age! A preacher shall spend himself in declaring the menaces of God against sinners: *He shall speak and write against them bitterness: He shall paint to them the fearful assaults of approaching death, and describe the dangers and horrors of eternal death: And the sermon once over, what comes of all his labours? Why, the whole ends in idle acclamations of praise. O the fine things he has said! Prodigious! What a deal of Scripture! What high-flown doctrines! What eloquence! What not? Ah Christians! for pity's sake, leave *Daniel* without his golden collar, without the purple he despises. Leave your preachers without*

praise, without reward, and guard against the evils which threaten you. We want not *Cameleon-like*, to feed upon air: We covet not your applause or your riches, but your souls. We have souls to save, as well as you; and are as liable to be hurried into pride as yourselves. If then we sacrifice all the pleasures and comforts of life, which we perhaps might relish as much as you; and sacrifice them all to save you by humility; make us not so unkind a return as to render our sacrifice fruitless by damning us with vain-glory. No: Leave us to hush our own pride asleep as well as we can. In a word I once more repeat it: Leave us without praise or reward, to provide for the safety of your own souls.

For my part I declare to you, I will never address you but to tell you the positive will of God; to invite you to break those servile fetters which link you so fast to the earth; and to persuade you to steal a thought sometimes from the flesh and the creature to give it to the spirit and the creator. In short my whole purpose shall ever be, to persuade you, if possible, to shake off that indolence and that distaste, which detain you in spiritual darkness and keep you so lukewarm in the service of God. If then you believe, what your Saviour tells you; that man liveth by every word which proceedeth from the mouth of God; if you are satisfied, that God has made us *dispensers* of that word; if you are convinced, that the word of God is a fruitful seed, which sown in a good heart disposed to bear and retain it, is capable of yielding fruit an hundred fold; have a care, that you do not choke that seed of salvation, that you do not draw death from the means of life, by either neglecting to bear it, or not bearing as you ought. Remember, that, if you bear and do not; you will only bear to your judgment: And if warn'd of your evils and dangers you study not to remove them; yours will be the whole guilt of your ruin. Look ye, Beloved, God expects something great from you and from me, particularly in the approaching holy time. Wo to me! Wo to you! Wo to us all; if we frustrate his expectations! His grace is ready at our call: If we neglect it, eternal misery must be our portion: But if we improve it, eternal joy. Which I beseech God, &c. In the Name, &c.

SERMON

S E R M O N

On QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

St. LUKE xviii. 31, to 34.

JESUS took the Twelve and said to them: Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and all things shall be fulfilled which were written by the prophets of the Son of Man. For He shall be deliver'd to the Gentiles; and shall be mock'd and scourged and spit upon: And after they have scourged him they will kill him, and the third day he shall rise again. And they understood none of these things.

O THAT I might, Beloved Christians! O that I might but calmly meditate upon the infinit industry, the amorous Providence, with which our Almighty Sovereign so graciously delights to help our feeble souls and guide our tottering feet, through this impervious maze of miseries, to eternal bliss! How could I feed and fatten on the gladdening theme! O Thought, ecstatic Thought! What heavenly transports of seraphic Love and grateful joys must not these very hearts of flesh be ravish'd with, in sight of so much and such sweet excess of bounty as that with which our God exerts himself in our behalf; might we but, quite free from interruption, enjoy the rapturous Reflection? But ah the black intruding melancholy which damps my rising spirits; bears down my heart with an oppressive horror; and dragging my mind from the enchanting contemplation of my Almighty Maker's amorous sollicitudes, forcibly fixes it to the sad consideration of Man's stupidity! Whenever I reflect on this, I am stunn'd; my soul even shrinks; and grief, astonishment, and love and fear and indignation rob me alternately of myself. O my too loving JESUS! Whether dost thou hurry with such earnest zeal? To Jerusalem? To suffer ignominy, pain and death for human Nature? Ah! Turn back, too generous Jesus, turn back. If thy Disciples understood none of these things, when Thou did'st speak them; much less will These understand them, when transacted, when fulfill'd. Turn back, dear Lord; and die not for ungrateful stupid Christians: For Christians, not satisfied with what Thou hast done, will abuse all Thou can'st do for them; by expecting Thee to do All. Before thy Passion, before thy Death, what did'st Thou not for Them, In thy Incarnation, Birth and Life, and

Conversation? Yet what has it served? What hast Thou done to thy Vine of Necessary which has not been abused? What can'st thou do more, of superabundant, which will not be abused? Turn then once more; and labour not in vain for such a fruitless trunk, as thankless, thoughtless, slothful Man! With all the labour thou hast bestow'd to cultivate this Vine, what has it yielded Thee but thorns and briars, instead of fruit? Ah! How truly may I not say of Christians, with the inspired Author of the PROVERBS, * *I pass'd by the field of the Slothful, and by the Vineyard of the Foolish; and behold nettles have wholly fill'd it and thorns have cover'd the face of it?* But O souls! Lovely precious souls of God! Favourit Vines! Chosen Vines of the eternal Father! O Christians! Could you expect God to do more for you than he has done? How comes it then that your affairs are in so bad a situation? O dearly Beloved Faithful! I say again, how do your affairs stand? God has done so much to save your souls; and will not you think of doing any thing yourselves? Surely, Christians, to guess by your lives, you do not understand that All which God has done for you is done to save yourselves? Surely you do not understand what he has done, or what remains for you to do? Let me then give you a lively sense of it: And take me as much in earnest as I shall speak to you in earnest. If ever any Subject I have handled required you to be grave; the Present does: When I am to shew you, as I shall now proceed to do, with the Help of the Divine Light,

- I. The very much which God has done and does, to save Mankind: *And*
- II. The very Little which Mankind do, to save Themselves.

" O Lord, my God! Thou, O unwearied source of charitable industry! What hast Thou done? Or rather, what hast Thou not done to save us? O! What monsters of ingratitude then must not We be; if, after doing all for us, Thou can'st not prevail upon us to do Something for ourselves? Forbid it, GOD of Love, forbid it!

* Chap. xxiv.

" Le,

Let not the multitude of mercies, Thou hast shower'd on us, be render'd frustrate, by our perverse supineness. But crown thy infinit profusion of beneficence with the celestial gift of such a powerful grace as may excite us to a truly Christian ardor in the great affair of our Salvation; and make us All as anxious to be saved, as Thou art graciously solicitous to save us."

I. The merciful industry of our all-gracious God, with regard to Human Nature did not confine itself, Beloved, to mere unactive wishes or unfruitful promises; but has shewn itself in the most profitable facts. In God it has ever been the same to wish the salvation of man and to promote it, by every bountiful assistance which a God of infinit power, wisdom, goodness and truth, could be expected to give a free being. That man might be eternally happy with himself, he extracted him out of the fathomless depth of nothing; form'd in him a soul, a living soul, a soul which was an emanation of himself, a breath of his divinity: And endow'd that soul with an understanding capable of knowing the greatness of his origin; a will capable of moving him, with grateful ardent love, towards the divine source from whence he proceeded; and a memory fitted for the reception and retention of all the ideas necessary and conducive to his Sovereign happiness. And the more inseparably to link him to his divine Creator, the Almighty Artist stamp'd on him an indelible likeness of himself. Thus great, thus noble, thus perfect did man issue forth from the hands of the Almighty. And O Almighty Majesty! Infinit as this thy merciful industry must appear to us in itself, what is it to the ineffably bounteous end thou hadst in it of conducting him, once extracted from the unmeasured abyss of nothing, to an immeasurable altitude of endless bliss? And ah! What a sweet excess of grateful love and active gratitude, ought not our admiration to end in; when we reflect, that all this industry was the sole effect of thy communicative mercy to useless creatures as yet incapable of meriting aught from Thee? O favourit souls of God! If you cannot love a God so generously profuse of bounties to you, enough to be grateful to him; what on this earth will you love; to what, to whom can you be grateful.

It is hard, Beloved Children; it is very hard to say, in which God manifested most his saving tenderness towards you: Whether in the natural gifts he bestow'd on you in your first creation, or in those he lavish'd on you when created, or rather prepared for you against you were created. What an infinity of prodigies did not his loving industry work for your service, profit and delight? The earth, the air, the seas, the elements in general, with all things in them: sun, moon and stars and

planetary orbs; plants, animals, and fish and fowl, and every other being animate and inanimate: All were produced, not for the benefit of God or of his angels, who had no need of them, but for You. All are so many favours heap'd on You by that all-bounteous God, who, infinitely desirous to save you, industriously created them, to serve you as so many means to lead you to salvation: That You, contemplating in them his infinit excess of love for You, and learning thence how much he is able and willing to do for you in the next world who has done so much for you in this, might correspond to his ardent love for You with an ardent grateful love of Him, in a virtuous active love for yourselves. And what more could yourselves wish God to do towards exciting you to repay his solicitous providence with a provident industry for your own eternal happiness?

Instead of doing this much for You, He might have eternally remain'd without doing any thing in your behalf. From all Eternity immensely and unalterably blessed in himself, he might have ever enjoy'd his sovereign infinit beatitude, without ever launching out himself to think on You. And yet has he condescended to think on you, to love you, to provide continually for you; and keeps all his Divine Attributes employ'd to your advantage: His Omnipotence, to support your being and to give being to an innumerable variety of creatures for your good: His unfathomable wisdom to dispose all things for your greater good: And his inexhaustible bounty, to win you by ineffable methods to be inamour'd with good. And all this he does with the most tender, ardent, ineffable, constant love, a love which is never tired with heaping benefits on you, and which never will be tired with adding fresh ones, unless the perversity of your ingratitude should force him to withhold his hand. But what farther shews the ineffability of his providential solicitude for You, is, that God, in all these benefits, communicates his very self to you. It is He who lights you, in the sun; warms you, in the fire; nourishes you, in your daily food; delights you in the harmony of music, and comforts you in every consolation you meet with. You have nothing, You enjoy nothing, you are nothing, but what comes in from and through him. It is He who helps you to whatever you obtain of pleasant, profitable, needful or sufficient: And helps you, with delight to himself; not for any advantage you can bring to him, but for the pure gracious pleasure he takes in affording you every advantage which may bring you safe to him. It is He, who closes your eyes to sleep; watches at your pillow to guard you from danger, while you dose; and, when you wake, directs your steps and sends his ministers the angels to smooth your way, *lest you hurt your foot against a stone.**

* Psalm xc.

In short, it is He, who continually assists you, to provide you with necessaries; helps you to speech, to motion, and to life; delights in every success you meet with, and therefore disposes every thing to succeed to your advantage, or is displeased when you perversely turn it to your disadvantage.

Do you want then, O Christians, farther proofs of the excessive industry which the Almighty love has exerted to save You? Take then these fresh proofs. The glory he prepares for You, he could have absolutely refused without injustice, after all you can or could have done; or, in granting, he might have granted it as a mere liberal gift, which you by nature were incapable of meriting merely of yourselves. Instead of which, to make you as completely blessed as your nature was capable of being made, he put it in your power, each, to attain to the function of his all satiating bliss in your own right: And this he did by entering into a gracious covenant with you, and pledging his eternal truth to grant you everlasting glory and felicity, on certain conditions extremely easy, solidly pleasant, and absolutely necessary, (independently on that covenant) even for your temporal felicity. Conditions, which, but to name them, must force a blush even from the reprobates who not only slight but openly violate them: Conditions, which amount to nothing more than loving your Eternal Benefactor and giving him proofs of your Sovereign love for him by serving, honouring and obeying him above all his creatures, and loving one-another for his sake. O prodigy of perversity! O the ungrateful propensity of human nature, to find difficulty in the observance of such amiable conditions! O man! O Monster! Unparalleled monster of ingratitude! *Doth then the seat of iniquity cleave to thee so closely, * who seignest labour in a precept of so much facility, delight and utility to thee? But what shall I say: The goodness of God has only served to fuel the ingratitude of man. The Almighty knowing the perversity of human nature, and how much man's proneness to evil would incline him to transform ease into difficulty, favours into hardships, and blessings into curses, would even guard him from himself; and therefore mercifully fortified him with supernatural grace, and thus raised him above himself. But, alas, man, stupid, thankless, thoughtless man, thus raised, thus fortified, thus enobled still lived insensible of the greatness of his dignity. In a word, as David more beautifully expresses it, Man when he was in honour did not understand: He was compared to the brutes, by his low-minded pursuits, and became like them in the gratification of his grovelling sordid appetites. God created man to be eternally happy with the angels in Heaven, by studying to be, in obedience to his Divine Maker, temporally so in society with his fellow-creatures on earth: And*

* *Psal. xciii.*

man basely and foolishly spurning at the gracious offer of his divine benefactor for the sake of stooping to a level with brutes upon earth, chose to be temporally miserable here, to be eternally so hereafter in the society with Devils. Thus, to return to the prophet, *Man, when he was in honour did not understand: He was compared with the brutes, and became like them: Nay sunk beneath them.*

Ah! Who might not have expected then, beloved Christians, after such a base return for so many and such infinite favours, to see the Almighty withhold his bounteous hand, repudiate the ungrateful species, and create some new, some more deserving, race to heap his mercies on? Thus did he act with the rebellious angels; when he created us to fill their vacant seats: Thus did we richly merit, he should act with us; when we, more base than they, perverted his greater mercies towards us to an unnatural revolt against him: And thus had he acted; he would have done us no more injustice than he did to them. But O with what a stupendous tenderness of charity did he not shew how much greater value he set upon mankind than on the angels! Them, when they sinn'd, he would not suffer in his presence; but plunged them straight from their celestial seats, down to the Abyss of Hell: And yet would dain to stoop himself down to very Hell to lift-up man, sinful man, almost against his inclination even to Heaven. Yes, my dear Jesus: Yes, my God. Thou, from the depth of thy prodigious love, to save us almost in spite of us; to conquer in short our obdurate hearts, with such an ardent Charity as might suffice to melt even flints into a sense of gratitude, thou would'st descend from thy celestial throne; debase thyself to the assumption of our nature to thy own; become our brother; and give thyself a voluntary victim for our crimes: And O with what a throng of wondrous circumstances of unfeign'd affection did'st thou not accompany this generous step!

Oh Christians! When the Lord of Heaven descended upon earth, he came with such anxious eagerness to give you proofs of his love, not only in doing but in suffering for you, that hungering after pains, he would not lose one single instant of torture. In the very first moment of his human life, within his virgin mother's sacred womb, he would enjoy by anticipated industry, all the miseries he came to share with human nature: And therefore presented to his imagination every bitter future circumstance of his whole life, his passion and his death; his poverty, fatigues, and stripes; his buffets, scourges, thorns and nails and crosses and death. And because the greatest of these evils were not to torment his precious body so soon; the impatience of his love call'd his heavenly fore-knowledge to aid, that they might torture his spirit with an inward incessant martyrdom, even before his birth.

And

And when he was born, that he might suffer the more, he would be born of a lowly poor and unregarded virgin, not at his mother's home; but in a foreign village, in a foreign stable, exposed to every hardship of the most inclement season of the year and of the most ungrateful hour of the night. Nay more, unable to bear the waiting to shed his blood for man, till the appointed time for shedding the whole, he must even begin to shed it from his earliest tenderest infancy, for sinners whom he personated in the act, tho' all innocence himself. When he grew-up, what did he not do and suffer for us all? What weary days and sleepless nights did he not fill-up his whole life with? How hard did he not labour with his precious hands, for the support of his loved parents and himself? What innumerable fatiguing journeys did he not measure with his feet, for the instruction of us all? What affronts, what indignities, what pains, what hunger, thirst and wants and injuries did he not voluntarily encounter, day after day, and year after year? And why? Was it for any need himself could have of all this? No, no, he could receive no advantage from it, as God and Lord of all his creatures, able to do with them whatever he pleased, and incapable of receiving any additional felicity from aught which is out of himself. He came an infant, poor trembling with cold, fainting with hunger, abandon'd by all, and in extreme distress, on purpose to encourage us to suffer something with and for him; and to accustom us to an affection for the sufferings and wants, and even voluntary distresses which we must endure for God and our salvation. Ah! can it be possible then, that, after such a noble example of God's setting us, we can think of nothing but delights, can suffer nothing but our ease; and do nothing but sleep and idle away our time in total inaction or in fruitless action?

But what is all I have said? Nothing: Mere nothing to the farther instances of God's divine sollicitude for our salvation. How much, how greatly he desired it, and labour'd for it, nay suffer'd for it, his passion, his bloody sweat, his scourges, his buffets, his cruel crown of thorns, the cords, the nails, the hammer, cross, and ignominy and death he suffer'd, bear sufficient witness. Ah Christians! Do you reflect, what means a God's being outrageously reviled for you; scourged, buffeted and torne and bruised and wounded for you; for you condemn'd to an ignoble death, a death in bitterness equivalent to the united deaths of all his creatures? Ah! Why did he consent to be loaded with a heavy cross, to be exalted on it, to have his sacred hands and feet nail'd to it; to be exposed upon it to the blasphemies of men, to the utmost outrages of Hell, and even to the dereliction of his eternal Father; to expire in the embraces of it and pour

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forth his precious blood upon it with such a generous profusion as not even to leave one single drop in his precious body which he did not shed for you! Why, I say, but that, exalted from the earth himself, he might draw you all to himself, by giving you an early apathy for earthly enjoyments, an early tincture of love for his cross and for the glory which is the promised reward of such as cheerfully share with him in his sufferings? Such, such, Christians was the great end of God's sollicitude for you: Your salvation was the end of all he did, of all he suffer'd. And so ardently did he pursue this end, that, to compass it, had one death not been super-abundantly sufficient; his love would have made him cheerfully submit to thousands of deaths and sufferings more, all equally bitter, nay infinitely more so, if that was possible. In fact, finding the much, the infinitely much, he had decreed to do and suffer for you to the end of his mortal life; still infinitely short of his infinit excess of love for you; therefore would he perpetuate his death and sufferings to the end of time that his precious blood might daily flow afresh for you in the unrepentant sacrifice of the altar; that you might draw fresh recruits of life from the fountains of your saviour in the adorable sacrament of the Eucharist. This was his exalted purpose and those the means he took to affect it.

But those were not all! A love like that of God for you would not content itself with exerting his common providence, to save you; with suffering to save you; with dying to save you; with leaving you a lasting legacy of his body and blood, to save you: Unless he left you his divinity also, to save you. He knew, as he told us, that *it is the spirit which quickeneth the flesh profiteth nothing*. And therefore, after leaving his precious body and blood to us for a lasting legacy and monument of his love and desire of our salvation: *Take ye: This is my body: This is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for you to the remission of sins*; He thought it not enough to shed that blood and leave it to us as a precious but inanimate pledge of his prodigious love. He would even raise it up again, reanimate it with his spirit, and give us, in it, his whole spirit: That we might, at our pleasure, receive, in it, all he had to give, himself, his heavenly Father and the Holy-Ghost; in short the whole Omnipotent, adorable Trinity. And that he might engage us to set a just value on so immensely great a treasure left us; he sent us the Holy-Ghost to enlighten our minds with the knowledge of the infinit benefits communicated to us in this ineffable mystery of love; to enflame our hearts with an ardent thirst of receiving it, and to invite us to this invaluable banquet by innumerable inspirations, spiritual lectures, sermons, edifying examples,

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ples, miracles, and other graces, lights, and heavenly means. O infinit overflow of prodigious love!

Thus much O Christians did your merciful God, do to save you: And this is what your Saviour hinted to his Apostles in the words of my text: *Behold, we go up to Jerusalem and all things shall be fulfill'd which were written by the prophets of the son of man.* And what were those things? Why: The mercies the ineffable benefactions of God to man which I have just related. Your God *shall be deliver'd to the Gentils* for you; and *shall be mock'd* for you; and *scourg'd* for you; and *spit-upon* for you; and *after they have scourged him, they will kill him*; and even this will he endure for you; *And the third day he shall rise again*, and all for you. O bounty past all tracing! Had it been possible for any one person of the Blessed Trinity to stand in need of something to be done for his eternal safety; what more, my Jesus, could'st thou have done for thy eternal Father, or thy Holy Ghost than thou would'st do for me and every Christian in particular? Would'st thou, God and man as thou art, deliver up thy divine personage to the Gentils to be tortured and insulted? The same thou would'st do for us. Would'st thou submit for love of either of those eternal persons to be mock'd, and scourged, and spit-upon? All this thou would'st even undergo for us. Would'st thou for them even suffer thyself to be assassinated? Even so thou would'st for us? And would'st thou also raise thy assassinated body again to life on purpose to give thy living self in food to them? Ah! all this is nothing more than what thou would'st even do for the least, the meanest, of us all! And yet, what more could'st thou do for thy eternal Father, for thy eternal spirit, for thy eternal self, than what thy love urges thee to do for us and our salvation? What more could'st thou offer them in present at an thy living body and blood, divine and human nature? Nay more, I say, my Jesus: in thy eternal, infinit, ineffable intercourse of love with the father and the comforter, what had'st thou to give them of more, or more invaluable, than thy whole blessed self? And would not thy tender love for man be satisfied, unless thou give all this to him? O love superior to all comprehension! No wonder, that, while they were only foretold, the Apostles, who heard them, *understood none of these things.* For what daring mortal could ever have hoped, or expected, or even thought it possible, that a God infinitely unalterably eternally happy in himself, independently on any creatures, should dain to stoop so low, and heap such immense benefits on so useless, worthless, thankless a creature as sinful man, out of a pure desire of saving him who was so very indifferent about saving himself? Who, I say, could have thought it possible, till our all-gracious

God reduced it to fact? No wonder therefore that *This word was hidden from the very Apostles*, and that *They understood not the things which were said*, till they were done. But now they are done, O Christians, what strange infatuation blinds you from understanding them? O strange insensibility! O foolish and slow to believe! How long will you remain ignorant of, and thankless to the immense profusion of your Almighty sovereign's favours? And that you are ignorant of them, who can doubt who compares the Almighty's conduct towards you with your behaviour to him? how much, how infinitely much has he not done to save mankind! And yet how little (O how little) do mankind do to save themselves!

II. No Christian, I am sensible, is willing to be thought ignorant of the much which JESUS CHRIST has done for him. All Christians believe, at least pretend to believe in all these things which Christ told his Apostles: But alas there is so very little similitude between the belief of Christians and their practice, that a man must have the heart of a tiger, not to melt with concern. Every-day we see this life grow shorter and shorter and consumed by peace-meal, by time, by inclemency of varying seasons, by sicknesses, labours, wants, anguish, disasters and an almost infinit change of causes: And still is the whole of our senses, passions, reason, graces, souls and all, blindly devoted to this sickle life. Every-one sighs after *Heaven* with a thousand vows: every-one pretends to it by ten thousand titles; yet is every affection, which proceeds from every human heart, a snare which decoys and fixes it to earthly life. That beauty which so enchants us in this life, must have an end; those riches which so infatuate us must have an end; that applause which so bewitches us must have an end; those honours which so attract and swell our ambition must have an end; an end, in a word, there must be to this very flesh which so intoxicates, betrays and enslaves us: Our souls alone neither will nor can have an end. And yet what abstinence, what pains, what watchings, what industry and anxiety is not applied to preserve and adorn our beauty, to augment our wealth, to provoke our praises, to grasp at power, pomp and dignities, and to pamper this fraudulent flesh? But to save our precious immortal only souls, what is done? What pains are taken? What industry applied? Ah! Nothing but the most horrible negligence fills our days, our months, our years, our life! With St. Gregory we may say of the major part of mankind: "They place their whole confidence in transitory objects; they desire not so much as a taste of aught but what is transient: And therefore, burying all their thoughts in fleeting things, they lose the very wish of what is permanent."

O lovely

O lovely souls of God! Look then about you. Give an alternate glance towards *Heaven* and *Hell*. O *Heaven*! O mansion of unending joys! O *Hell*! O seat of sempiternal horror! O the despairing shriek of this! O the transporting melody of that! O dreary dungeon of tortures inexpressible! O blest abode of ever-smiling pleasure! O racking pangs! O pangs forever to be felt; never, ah never to be told! O exquisite delights! Delights prepared for human hearts to enjoy, above the reach of human words to express! O the legions of fiends employ'd in torturing there! O the God of immensity beatifying here! O misery! O bliss! O the blasphemies! O the songs of heavenly praise! O the darkness! O inextinguishable light! O *Heaven*! O *Hell*! O eternity! Is the saving of the soul nothing less than a lifting of it up to eternal repose, and ecstatic enjoyment in the beatific embraces of God? Is the losing that soul nothing less than precipitating it down to incessant never-ending torture in an unequal combat with the *Devils*? And which ever be our lot, must it be for an eternity, a whole eternity? O incomprehensible fool-hardiness! What a hazard do we run! Suspended between unquenchable flames and insatiable joys, between an eternity of exquisite anguish, and an eternity of exquisite bliss, still do we aspire? Still do we laugh? Still do we presume? Still do we think on nothing but spending our days in earthly enjoyments, to descend in an instant into *Hell*? But ah! All this is innocence in the present flagitious age: When the time of Christians is engross'd and lavish'd in intrigues of lust, in fraudulent pursuits, in the promotion of revenge, ambition, luxury, avarice, gluttony, libertinage and infidelity and atheism. What time is given now to God? What days to the Holy Sacrament? What hours to public or domestic prayer? What minutes to the soul? God and his church and sacred scriptures are sunk to disrepute. The first is become an object of indifference: The second a subject of contempt: And the last matter of mere ridicule, a common-place book of jests and repartees. To tell even Catholics now, that *Sundays* must be sanctified intire to God, is being a rigorist; that festivals and fasts are dangerous to violate, that *Lent* is not a mere political invention but a sacred institution, is being a bigot; to add that regular Christians ought to keep themselves in daily fitness for the holy sacraments and regularly approach to them at proper stated times, is now mere priestcraft. Now to hear a scanty service of less than half an hour, God knows how, upon a *Sunday*, and spend the remainder of the day in dress, in chat, in idle parties, visits of pleasure, or *rendez-vous* of business, in play, in drinking, railing, ranting, calumny, and scandal, and every vicious or dissipating occupation, is sanctifying the sabbath day. To hear prayers on other days of obligation, is now be-

come a supererogatory good-work. And fasts and abstinence are now esteem'd a matter of indifference, mere indifference. How busy is not half the Catholic world in this nation to prepare for the approaching *Lent*? But how? Is it to examine their consciences, to devest themselves of their sins and sinful habits, and to enter into a holy spirit of voluntary penance? Is it, in a word, to satisfy God's injured justice? To humble their pamper'd flesh? To acquire the virtue of temperance? To fast forty days after the example of Christ, that they may render themselves more worthy to partake of the banquet of his precious body and blood in their *Easter* communion! No, no: Imagin it not, beloved. The chief anxiety of modern Catholics is, how they shall lay-in a sufficient stock of gluttony before-hand, that they may not be too great sufferers by *lent*, but may rather make themselves previous amends for what is denied them in *Lent* with what they devour in carnival; or, that eating themselves sick they may not be obliged to fast, tho' to fast themselves well again. And of those who will not quite run these lengths, how many are already busied in calling forth all their dormant aches and pains, and weaknesses and work'd-up fears; in consulting their physicians, their apothecaries, their nurses, their sycophants for tolerably plausible pretexts to ground a dispensation on: And how many, in imposing upon their directors, and more on themselves, to obtain a licence which neither he can give nor they receive? Ah what is it could possess then those persecutors of their senses who lived in ancient times? What could induce them to chuse the most fearful solitudes for their abodes; where, surrounded with tigers, wolves, and other savage animals, the grass of the fields served them for meats, the water of the brooks served them for their drink; where their beds were the rude furzes of the desert, their covering the sky; where naked they stood exposed to all the inclemencies of heat, of cold, of damps, and scorching sun-beams, and all their rest consisted only in a few broken slumbers on briars, thorns, and rocky crags? What could provoke them to treat their tender limbs so rudely; to torture them with whips and disciplines and nettles and every cruel instrument; and starve their bodies to imbecillity with fasts and rigorous abstinences? O generous souls! I own, I had almost accused you of cruelty in thus assiduously torturing yourselves. But O how do your rigours reproach the present delicacy of modern Christians. O primitive saints! Well do those self-tormenting rigours speak how well you knew, what an enormous evil it is to lose God: What an immense blessing it is to possess God, to enjoy God, and that forever.

O dearly beloved, Christians! Shall these saints have done so much; and found it necessary, with all

all their innocence, to do thus much to save themselves: And You, with all your guilt and dangerous dispositions, have no occasion to do any thing? Shall they have fasted their whole lives from worldly pleasures, nay from the necessities of life to attain to the feast of Heaven? And shall you even grudge to fast one *Lent* from superfluities to save yourselves from *Hell*? Shall God himself have done so much to save you; and You refuse to do any thing to save yourselves? Ah! be wise, and trifle not with those precious souls, which God has set so great a value on. He created you, to save you; preserves you, to save you; took flesh of you, to save; conversed with you, suffer'd for you, to save you; and even died to save you. Vouchsafe then, at least, to live, to save yourselves. Begin from this moment to set about it. Profit by the sacred approaching time of penance, to shew yourselves desirous to be saved. Remember that we are not less obliged to save ourselves than those Christians were who labour'd for it with such incessant self-denial. We are not in a greater state of security than they were. We are not less capable, than they, of eternal bliss; nor less in danger of Eternal damnation. Ah! what means then our unaccountable tranquillity, or rather supineness, in a work of such last importance; Where we as much as they are threaten'd with all the terrors of an unequal war with those powers of darkness, who are combating against our spirit? It means, that our best inclinations, our best thoughts, our best wishes, are suffocated by intruding vanities and corruption: That our souls with shameful inversion, suffer the passions to get the upper hand of reason, sin to take place of grace and the word of God. It means, that we forget how much that great and gracious God has done to save us, and that we must do something to save ourselves. It means, that we do not sufficiently consider the immense odds between an eternity of felicity in the enjoyment of God and an eternity of misery in the society of *Devils*. It means, that we never sufficiently reflect, with St. Paul, that *the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory which shall be reveal'd in us*, in virtue of the passion and death of Christ. In short, it means, that we, infinitely less excusable than the twelve, have as yet *understood none of these things*. Great God! Thou source and fountain of all lights, why do'st thou not make them evident to us?

But ah! Why ask this of God: As if he had not already exerted his whole omnipotence and mercy to illuminate us? Ah! Let us own, that it is a crying shame, that Christians should be so ignorant of these truths as, by their ingratitude, they seem to be. Great God of glory? Shall infinit Majesty have stoop'd itself to an offensive stable, thence to ascend on an ignoble gibet? Shall he have shed so

much precious blood of his own, and exacted so much from his sacred-martyrs and other self-torturing mortified christian heroes? Shall he have instituted so many and such venerable sacraments and mysteries? Shall he have wrought a number without number of stupendous prodigies for the establishment of our holy religion: That this religion, *that is*, the fruit of so much divine and human blood, so many fatigues, and pains, and deaths, and lights and graces, should end in ----- what? In sprinkling our cradles with a little hallow'd water? And that merely, that we may give up our whole life after to idleness, to tricks, to intrigues, to pleasure, to ease, to indevotion, to sin? Ah! For pity's sake, for pity to the blood of Christ, for pity on your own inestimable souls which cost him so dearly, resolve, O Christians, to change your conduct for a wiser. Woe to you, if your thoughts remain so buried as they are in early enjoyments. Woe to you, if your thoughts are not directed to your own salvation which merits your first your chief attention. Woe to you, if, lul'd asleep by the affairs of this life, you neglect to dispose well those of the next, a whole eternity depends upon it. Ah! If you should; with encreasing anguish, eternally lost to yourselves, You will irremediably cry-out: O unhappy me! My God came down to the earth, that I might with ineffable mercy be raised to *Heaven*: And behold me plunged into *Hell*. This soul of mine was purchas'd at a prodigious price: And I as cheaply have lost it, and lost it irrevocably. God loved me to an incomprehensible excess: And yet behold me eternally buried in the avenging flames of his hatred. God did, on his side, every thing, to place me among his saints, and Lo! How I have irrecoverably sunk myself into an association with *Devils*, there to weep with gnashing of teeth for a whole Eternity. But ah! Forbid, Great Lord of Lords, that any of these Christians, to whom I speak, should ever be reduced to such a late and fruitless repentance. But ah! what kind of preservative shall you use against such a fruitless sorrow? Why: Your preservative, Beloved, must consist in this: Live like persons who have death and eternity in view. And live in such a constant preparation for death and eternity, as that you may deserve to live eternally. Since God has graciously done so much to save your souls; blush at the very thoughts of doing so little, as the generality of you do, to save yourselves. O fountain of all wisdom, give me to teach these Christians the high importance of acting thus: Or rather, O Thou, my God, vouchsafe to make them feel it! Which I beseech God, &c. *In the Name, &c.*

End of the First Quarter of the ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR.

S E R M O N

On the FIRST SUNDAY in LENT.

ST. MATTHEW iv. 1, 2, 3, 11.

JESUS was led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, afterwards he was hungry. And the tempter approach'd. . . . And when the devil left him; behold, angels came and ministr'd to him.

JESUS led into temptation, beloved brethren! what mortal then shall be exempt from it? JESUS submit to undergo temptation! What mortal shall murmur at enduring it, or despair of surmounting it? Shall innocent JESUS arm against the very approach of temptation with a forty-days austere retreat; and his sinful disciples presume to grapple with it, without any preparation at all? Why, think you, would our divine master be tempted, but to encourage us to endure temptation with patience and fortitude, when it comes? Why would he arm against temptation, with so long, so painful, so continued an abstinence, but to teach us that temptations are dangerous evils? Why would he be led by his divine spirit to the encounter of temptations, but to shew us that all the evil of temptations lies in our cowardly fear or arrogant contempt of them? And why would he manifest his victory in a glorious solemn triumph amidst an illustrious band of ministering angels, but to convince us that our perfidious tempter may be and is to be conquer'd and that the victory over him is rewarded with the noblest, richest most desirable fruits of glory? But what! tempter, *did I say?* Ah! many are the tempters, who urge us to combat: Many are the temptations which besiege us from without, or watch to betray us within. GOD himself is sometimes pleased to tempt us: The *Devil* is always busy in tempting us: And we ourselves are too often taking *Satan's* work out of his hands, by being our own tempters. And under this last circumstance it is, that we have the most to fear. For when GOD is our tempter, it is our own fault, if we are not safe: He tempting us, or rather exciting us, only to good, by such trials as he is pleased to send us to try our fidelity to him. Let no

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man then, when he is tempted to sin, say that he is tempted by GOD. For GOD, as St. James observes, * is not a tempter of evils. No: in that sense, He tempts no man †. When he does send you trials, 'tis for your good; O Christians: Nor does he even send or permit them beyond your power to bear, or without giving you the means and graces necessary to reap advantage from them. No, no; says St. Paul ‡, GOD is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you can, but will work also with temptation advantage, that you may be able to, sustain. In short, therefore is it, that the Lord your GOD tempteth you, THAT IT MAY APPEAR WHETHER YOU LOVE HIM, OR NOT, WITH ALL YOUR HEART. § Different, very different from this, is the conduct of Satan. He tempts us, to surprise us; tempts us, to betray us; tempts us, to destroy us. But! vain are all his temptations; unless we give him a helping hand by tempting ourselves. "Observe, says St. John ¶ *Chrysostom upon this gospel*, observe: When the "Devil took our Lord up to the pinnacle of the "temple, the fiend push'd him not, touch'd him "not; but only say'd to him: *Cast thyself down.* || "Whence we may learn, that every one who obeys the Devil precipitates himself rather than he "is precipitated. For the Devil may suggest, but "cannot force." Ourselves then are our own worst and most dangerous tempters.

If our tempters are many; our temptations are many also. Some are *internal*; *external* others: Of the *internal* ones, some arise from the illusion of the sense and imagination (wretched fruits of our original sin:) which we may be subject to sometimes, without any actual sin on our side; provided we are patient in enduring, and faithful in conquering, them. *For every-one is tempted by his own concupiscence abstracted and allured.* † Others proceed from the corruption of the will itself; and therefore generally presuppose some anterior guilt for their cause, and are seldom without some degree of actual guilt in the very temptation itself. For

* Chap. i † Ibid. ‡ 1 Cor. x.

† Deuter. xiii. § St. Matth. iv. || St. James i.

concupiscence, when it hath conceived by consent or dilectation, bringeth forth sin, more or less. But neither sort of these *internal* temptations could possibly affect the sacred person of Christ, who, in virtue of his hypostatic union, was perfect God and perfect MAN; and therefore free from every moral or physical blemish within him. Of *external* temptations there are also various sorts: Such are the different objects of our senses, according to the false lights in which they are proposed to us: Such are the suggestions of the Devil and the gay allurements of the world: Such too are the multitude of different tribulations, afflictions disappointments and sufferings, to which all human nature, since the fall of the first man, are indiscriminately subject. Now all these of themselves are capable only of affecting us outwardly; and therefore cannot be sinful, unless we render them so by consent or dilectation. Nay they are rich in the greatest fruits of glory and beatitude, if, after the example of Christ we bear them with patience and fortitude. And therefore says St. JAMES, *Blessed is the man who suffereth temptation: For when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them who love him.** There is then this difference between *internal* temptations and *external* ones, that all the former are evils which nothing but a special grace of God can render tolerable, and nothing can render desirable: Whereas some of the latter are, not a bare tolerable evil, but a desirable good, to such as persist in a faithful improvement of those graces which God affords to all to surmount them. And therefore was it that the Saviour of the world, who neither would nor could subject his spotless unspottable nature to the blemish of *internal* temptations, nevertheless, to set you an example, both could and would desire and encounter *external* temptations, for the sake of conquering them. Therefore would the divine JESUS be led by the spirit into the desert, to be tempted by the devil, that, putting him to flight, he might convince you by conquering him, that the fiend is an impotent tempter. Therefore would he court hunger with a fast of forty days, to convince you, by seeking it himself, that bodily sufferings are a desirable good. Therefore would he with fortitude sustain the suggestion of Satan, to relieve his hunger at the expence of a miracle; that, by repelling it, he might teach you not to presume, in time of distress, to set God a time for your deliverance, but to wait his good pleasure with magnanimous resignation. Therefore would he permit that the fiend should persuade him to release himself from the pain of hunger by casting himself down from the pinnacle; that, by the contempt of it, he might set you a lesson of patience and shew you that the delays of Divine

* *Ibid.*

succour are rather matter of fresh confidence in the Divine goodness than of despair in his providence. Therefore did he suffer the *infernal* rebel to carry his insolence even to the offering him *all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them* for one act of adoration, that the indignation with which he banished the impious suggester from his presence might convince you, that the world and its pleasures are of the worst kind of temptations, and therefore ever to be shun'd as much as possible, on account of their natural tendency to enervate devotion, to dissipate the mind, and to draw off the heart of man from his due allegiance to his Sovereign Lord, and only good. And therefore, in a word, did he, after subduing all these, suffer the angels to administer to him; that he might encourage you to struggle manfully against the Devil, the world and your own flesh, in sight of the glorious premium promised to your fidelity; and that he might convince you, that all the *external* temptations, which can attack you, are desirable, or at least, tolerable; if you will but resolve to make a faithful use of the graces which God is ready to afford you. At least tolerable, I say: For certain it is, that even of *external* temptations, there are some, which, tho', when they attack us, we may undergo without either sin or imperfection, while they are involuntary, yet may we not either wish for or court them: Such are the gaieties and intrigues of the world: Familiarities with beauteous or otherwise engaging persons of opposite sex, the extremities of either want or affluence, the mental suggestions and illusions of Satan, or the flattering incentives of the flesh. All which, on account of the intimate alliance offensive and defensive ever subsisting between them and the imagination, senses and sensual passions, are extremely dangerous and very difficult to endure without some degree of *internal* detriment. And therefore is it that tho' it be a blessing to suffer such temptations undefiledly; and tho' Christ did so; yet as we are not confirm'd in grace as he was, nor certain of our own fidelity in corresponding to his graces; we cannot be sure that we shall come-off with victory: Nor have we reason to hope we shall, if we wittingly run into the danger; since, according to the Holy Ghost, *He who loves danger shall perish in it.* We may then and must endure and resist all temptations of this kind when they come upon us: But we may not by any means procure or desire them. The only *external* temptations which we may with any safety go in search of are tribulations, disappointments and temporal crosses. Because these we are sure we may obtain grace and seasonable aid to conquer and improve to our advantage, if we approach but with confidence to the throne of God to implore the assistance we want. For as St. Paul justly observes, *We have not a high-priest who cannot*

have compassion on our infirmities; but tempted in all things, like as we are, without sin. * And therefore in that, in which He-himself suffer'd and was tempted, he is able to help them also who are tempted † Tribulations then are, not only tolerable evils, but a desirable good; and the only kind of temptations which we may with any safety covet and court. Whereas, alas, such is the strange perversity of human nature that these, tho' the best arms to storm Heaven with, are, of all kinds of temptation, the only-ones which we endeavour to shun. To recall you therefore from so prejudicial an error, and lead you back to the imitation of your suffering tempted Lord, in this holy time of penance and patience; I shall endeavour to reconcile you to temporal suffering, by shewing you, that

- I. Temporal afflictions are matter of necessity to sinners:
- II. Are matter of debt for the penitent: *And*
- III. Are matter of enviable gain for the *Just*.

" O God of tender mercy! Have thou compassion on our native frailty. And each us by thy grace, as thou has't taught us by example, to be enamour'd with the blessing of suffering for and with thee. Strengthen us to endure with Christian fortitude every tribulation or affliction which thou permittest, and permit what thou pleasest. Give us but constancy to bear and forbear, and exercise it as thou wilt, augment our patience, and encrease our pains: Try, tempt and prove and purify thy servants in this life; and here spare us not, so thou but spare us for Eternity."

I. Temporal sufferings are of two sorts. Those which come from our own deliberate choice are one sort: Such as voluntary mortifications and supererogatory works of penance. And these, if they be sought with a pure and fervent heart for the love of God, are undoubtedly highly pleasing in the eyes of his Divine Majesty. However that share which our will has in the choice of them often very considerably diminishes the sensibility of the suffering and leaves behind it, more or less, such a zest of self-love as lessens in some degree the merit of our patience. The other sort of sufferings are they which come from the hand of God himself, whether by his own positive dispensation, *immediately*, as when he tried his servant *Abraham* by demanding the life of his only son *Isaac*, or *mediately*, by second causes, as when he afflicted his servant *David* with a severe disease; or whether by his permissive providence, through the industry or artifice of *Satan*, as when he permitted the fiend to torment his servant *Job*; through the malice or inveteracy of

enemies, as when *David* was persecuted by *Saul*, *Elijah* by *Jezabel*; through the mistake or jealousy of friends or relations, as when the patriarch *Joseph* was set at bay by his brethren; or finally, in natural consequence of our own folly or vice, as when *Esau* lost his birth-right to his brother *Jacob*, or when *Sampson* conqueror of the whole nation of *Philistines* was conquer'd by a sordid passion for *Dalila*. Now all these sorts of tribulation, whatever quarter they come from or to whatever wise end God disposes them, whether to guard our innocence or to punish our past guilt, or to purify our virtue; They are of sovereign service, if we do but bear them as we may, and struggle with them as we ought. But still those sufferings which come to us from the hand of God are, abundantly more exuberant in grace and merit, if we make a right use of them than all the mortification and penance we can practice of ourselves. The reason is that, in voluntary sufferings, we have at least the satisfaction of doing our own will in some measure; whereas, in those which the Almighty either sends or permits, our will has no share but that which a Christian conformity with the Divine Will gives to it. This is so true, that, abstracting from all considerations of that heroic conformity, the greatest saints in this life, rather than undergo one stripe of God's avenging or purifying hand, would gladly compound to endure all the sufferings themselves could inflict upon themselves. So that voluntary mortifications and penance cannot be consider'd as of the number of real temptations; but are rather so many means to familiarize us and make us in love with the temptations of *External* tribulations which God is pleased to inflict upon us, or at least to permit us to be tried with from other quarters. In fact, it was not, till after the prophet had enured his flesh to a certain familiarity with suffering, by voluntary mortification and penitential exercises, as himself explains it, *In the day of my tribulation I sought God with my hands in the night before him, and I was not deceived; My soul refused to be comforted, I was mindful of God and was delighted and was exercised and I swept my spirit*: * It was not *I say*, 'till after he had made use of these means, that he was enabled by grace to court and covet and pray for the tribulations and temptations with which God should please to visit him. Then then it was, that, fired with a holy zeal of suffering for God and of being purified and fitted for Him in the furnace of tribulations, he cried out: *Try me, O God, and tempt my heart, with afflictions, examin me with sufferings and know my paths*, † Ah beloved Christians of mine! Such, such too ought to be your eagerness after tribulations: And such it would be, had you but, by a life of voluntary mortification and penance, learn'd to set a

* *Heb. iv.* † *Ibid. ii.*

* *Psal. lxxvi.* † *Psal. cxxxviii.*

true value upon the blessing of enduring afflictions with a truly Christian fortitude. To all of you, I speak, Beloved: As well to You, O innocents, as to penitents and sinners.

But if any Christians, more than others, ought to view with a thanks-giving eye and a heart full of gratitude, those afflictions with which God's merciful providence embitters every cup in this mortal life; it cannot be denied but that sinners have the greatest reason of all to be eternally grateful to their gracious God for the tribulations they meet with. Fondly, ah fondly, ought they to kiss the gentle rod which chastises them: To melt their souls to grateful tenderness, enough it should be to find, that, spite of the innumerable excesses by which they have forfeited the noble character of children of the most High, God has not lost the tender industry of a compassionate parent: And with reason might they adopt the words which *St. Peter Chrysologus* puts into the mouth of the prodigal son: "We indeed have forfeited the character of children: But he has not renounced the bowels of a tender parent." It is not to reprobates I mean to speak; but to those sinners, who, without any design of renouncing their pretensions to glory, run a sort of sideling race after the mean joys of this life; and, consecrating the flower of their affections to the earth, still retain a hankering after *Heaven*. The eternal *Jerusalem* is the termination of career which they propose to themselves: But alas so oblique is the road along which they rather reel than travel, that, without perceiving, they turn their backs upon the blissful city and steer headlong to *Babylon*. This, this it is which rouses the Divine mercy to exert itself in every gracious stratagem of love, to stop the straying mortals in their down-hill course. Too much does it affect the tender heart of their Divine Redeemer, to behold the flock of his own purchase thus madly bent on precipitating themselves into the jaws of eternal ruin. Therefore does he with the loudest menaces, dictated by an excess of tenderness, endeavour to strew with horrors that way which their deluded imagination presents to them spread with lilies and violets; that he may shew them the danger of their daring pursuits and persuade them to return on their steps. But ah! what voice shall he speak to them in, which will work the desired effect? To force them is destroying the nature he gave them of free-agents: And to win them to consent, what salutary counsels shall find way to their hearts who lock-up every avenue to them? Shall he graciously court them with the secret language of internal inspirations? To what purpose? sinners have acquired too confirm'd a habit of treating inspirations with ignominious repulses. Shall he thunder out his menaces by the eloquent mouth of some Apostle of his, whose au-

thorized zeal cites their vices to judgment and lashes their disorders in public? Ah! Enough is it, that a preacher with a just energy inveigh against their crimes, for sinners to keep at the remotest distance from him. Shall he lodge his sacred maxims in some nook of piety, where, unsuspected, they may secretly insinuate themselves into the hearts of the sinners who read? Alas, alas! Unaccustom'd are their hands to open, or their eyes to peruse, any other books, than those which, as if stamp'd with poison, convey to the soul in every word a wound. Ah! what then shall *JESUS*, wishful to save them, be able to do? He is willing by all means to have them his own: They are resolved by all means to have any-one for their owner but *JESUS*. What then shall God do with such obstinate creatures, who will not consent to be saved and whom he will not save without their consent, tho' he created them to be saved? What shall he do? He will do by them as by *Jonah*.

The prophet *Jonah* is commanded by God to go and preach penance to *Niniveh*. But dishearten'd at the danger he conceives in the boldness of the enterprise, and conquer'd by his false fears, he ventures, with a worse-concerted boldness, to disregard the Divine Commission; and, to steer a quite opposite course, takes shipping for *Tbarsis*. O my God! Full sensible am I, that thou knowest how to compel thy vassals to obey thee, when thou wilt be obey'd. But if thy creatures are deaf to thy heavenly voice, how shall they reach to understand thy will? How! Even as *Jonah* did. A sedition arises in the elements, the winds, the foaming surges, the fire-breathing clouds, with every horror of revolting nature, gather round the vessel, which the daring rebel sails in; and with rude contest dispute the office of forcing through every sense a passage to his soul by which the Almighty Sovereign's will may enter. But to what use all this? With that success? So far is it from recalling the *Refractory* to a sense of his duty; that all the bursting waves, which rolling-over, almost over-set the bulging bark, but serve, like the nightly murmurs of some neighbouring rivulet, to sooth him to a calm repose. The ocean rages more and more; the winds blow fierce with growing fury; the encroaching billows batter the wooden fortrefs with still augmenting force, and the pale trembling sailors seek their last recourse in prayer; While *Jonah*, all the while, with undisturb'd serenity, amidst the loud reports of heavenly wrath, not only rests but sleeps. Ah! shall he then, buried thus in slothful sleep, be swallow'd by destruction ere he see it coming? Shall *Jonah*, thus without redress (lost to life---to *Heaven*---to God---to himself---) perish amidst the consuming flood, to perish eternally in unconsuming fire. No, no: My God: Had this been thy design; Thou had'st no need to call a tempest to thy assistance.

assistance. The soothing serenity of a treacherous calm had lull'd him as well and lock'd all his senses in as profound a sleep, till, through some hidden leak the insinuating waters had wreak'd thy vengeance on the fleeing rebel. The storms which arise from the discording elements are often big with danger: While those which are excited by the saving hand of GOD, are but the rougher pilots which guide us to harbour in safety. Happy, happy for *Jonah* was it that he sail'd not in a calm: A calm might have lost him. Not to be lost he must be terrified. Nay not to be terrified, without fruit; he must be swallow'd-up, with sparing vengeance, and pass from the bosom of the ocean to the entrails of a *Whale*. There it is, that, buried to the world and it's flattering false hopes, he learns for the first time to live to GOD, to find himself: There, in a word, that he first returns to GOD with the sighs of a cordial repentance: *When my soul was in distress within me, then it was that I remember'd our Lord*, says he-himself. * Truly then may we say with St. Gregory, that tribulations are blessings sent us from Heaven to conduct us thither. "Nothing of all these, says the holy Father, "is sent us with destructive intent, but with the ineffably merciful design that we may improve them to our advantage."

Ah Beloved, sinful Christians! is not the conduct of GOD to *Jonah* the very same to you when he visits you with tribulations? Whither does the Almighty direct your steps? Say: Is it not to a blessed Eternity? To an endless Paradise? And whither do you miserably blind mortals, steer your course? Ah! Is it not through a dangerous laborious gulph of lusts and usuries and frauds and debaucheries and impieties, that you are sailing unconcern'd to the infernal abyss? Ah! shall GOD then, forgetful of his tender mercies, amuse your frenzy with favourable gales which may conduct you, drunk as you are with vices vanities and dissipation, to the perdition you are steering to? Or if, to turn your course from sure destruction to the eternal harbour of felicity, he wakes you to your safety with storms of tribulation, and drives you back from ruin with some heavy tempest of temporal pains, afflictions, infamy, or disappointments; can you deny it to be a gracious effect of bountiful severity, a rigour of saving mercy? Yes, yes; Own we must with St. *Augustin*, that, "when GOD exerts his scourge in this life, "his punishments are not as yet *Damnation*: but, "on the reverse, a caution against it." What, what is this fit of sickness, that disgrace, that other disappointment, but a merciful tempest raised by the anger of your compassionate GOD? a severe tempest is this statute of bankruptcy which has reduced you to indigence, O fraudulent trader. That

* *Jonah*. ii.

stroke of undermining treachery which has banish'd you from the graces of your Sovereign, O ambitious courtier, is a rigorous storm. An insupportable storm to you, O miser, is the loss of that sum lent out upon usury, the beggary this fire has reduced you to; the infamous want to which this mulct has sentenced you. Dreadful is the tempest of this blasting distemper, to your beauty, O self-idolizers! Of this dropsy, to you, O gluttons! Of this stone, this gout, this palsy, to you, O lechers! And O the dreadful hurricane with which the loss of this darling infant, the death of that friend, the advancement of this other rival, shakes every power of your souls, disjoins life, and jumbles in one rude wild confusion your senses passions, will and intellects! Every catastrophe, in short, nay every accident in life which runs counter to your inclinations, is a rude tempest to your senses, which you know not how to support. But ah! why? If all of them are but so many merciful means to restore you to salvation; ought you not to embrace them with joy and gratefully to thank the all-gracious author of them?

But "What, you'll cry! We rejoice, when "when GOD punishes us? We return him thanks "for for tormenting us? Could not GOD then "have won us over to his will by milder measures? "Why could he not, as heretofore he did our fathers, * carry us (like a nurse of Ephraim) in "his arms; and cure us so gently, as that we "might not know he cured us? In a word, instead of urging us with fire and steel, might he "not have allured us with caresses, according to "his promise, † I will draw them with the bands "of love; and I will be to them as lifting up the "yoke? Had he lifted up the yoke from touching "our shoulders; then, then indeed we must have "been wretchedly ungrateful not to thank him, "But shall we thank him for loading us with one "we cannot bear?" Hold, unthinking mortals, hold! What did not your gracious Lord do to prove to you that his yoke is sweet and his burden light? Nay what did he omit, to render that yoke (light and sweet as it was from the beginning) imperceptible to you? To my last discourse I appeal, for the much which he did to win you to himself by endearments. But if every gentle means loses all it's virtue, thro' the abuses of it in a patient; if indulgent remedies serve only to forward a gangrene; is it not mercy in the physician to stop the growing mischief with fire and steel? What tho' the incision, which immediate danger makes necessary, draw from the excruciated sufferer, while actually under cure, some groans, some tears, some shrieks of anguish; will not he have reason, when the cure is completed, to bless the hands which tormented him? Say then, O sinners: If your perversity render'd ineffectual

* *Hos*. xi.

† *Ibid*.

all

all the merciful tender methods by which God endeavour'd to restore you to a state of perfect spiritual health; was it not infinit mercy in God to obviate an eternal mortification, by rougher remedies? "God, *say you*, could draw you to himself by milder methods?" Ah! of all the mild methods he has made use of; Of all his gifts, his natural and supernatural benefits heap'd upon you; his miracles, his doctrines, his death and passion, his sacraments, his graces, his inspirations, his holy word deposited in the sacred scriptures, or extracted into apostolic sermons, devout lectures, and pious conversations: In a word of all his untold indulgences, What-one can you point-out to me, which has yet met with the desired effect, it was capable of producing? What has not been said, what has not been done by him of indulgent? What is not daily said and done by his ministers, to wean mankind by gentle means from luxury, vanities, intemperance, injustices and lusts and all the innumerable disorders with which the whole world is over-run and sullied? Nevertheless, are those disorders at an end? Are they so much as diminish'd? But let us speak plain: Do they not daily encrease? Surely then if God has not pass'd an irrevocable decree of damnation against you, O sinners; Surely if he has yet one ray of mercy left for you, your good requires him to exert more vigorous methods to draw you with vehemence from the ruin you are so obstinately wedded-to. Vain were all counsels, maxims, vain all examples to persuade this youth to a little more piety, a little less libertinage, insolence, and lawless freedom, while vigour boil'd fervent through his veins: A slow, consuming hectic has damp'd his daring spirits: and now how sober, regular and pious is he grown! To little purpose was it, to preach to that young lady, to moderate her vanity, to renounce the pride of dress, to lay aside the gay ensnaring airs which fill'd her hours, and tended only to the raising in her unwary admirers the base ungenerous project of her ruin: till that corrosive malady, which often proves an enemy implacable to beauty, disfiguring her face, restored her soul to all it's former excellence: And how bow modest, how composed and how devout is she become! O precious tribulation! How necessary art thou to bring sinners to a sense of themselves? And yet, O sinners, is it your perversity which reduces God to this hard dilemma of either giving you up to perdition or of recalling you from it by tribulations. Justly therefore might *Tertullian* say, "O thrice happy the servant, whose master urges him to amendment, and loves him too well to deceive him by the dissimulation of his faults!" But—

"II. All this is true, *says some penitent sinner*, I make no doubt, but that the stripes with which

"the Almighty forces sinners back to him are so many benevolent effects of saving rigour. I believe, with *St. Augustin*, that they are the scourges of our merciful God *correcting for a time, that he may not be obliged to damn for Eternity*. Nevertheless the part of justice, *methinks*, should require him to use me with less rigour, who am return'd to my duty. That he should chastise me, while revolting from him; I could have no room to complain: But must own with *St. Bernard* that *his scourges were stripes of mercy*; and that *he chastised me because he loved me*. But, when, grown sensible of my guilt, I return all penitent to his arms, why should he not, like the good Father of the prodigal Son, meet me with caresses, and repay with effects of amorous tenderness my tears of compunction? So then, Christians, you did sin? "Yes: But I repented of it." You repented; it is true: And it is well you did repent. But still it is true that you sinn'd: And with what face then can you, who have sinn'd, murmur at suffering for having sinn'd? See you not, that, while you are endeavouring to prove that tribulations are not a matter of necessity for you, you prove them at least to be matter of debt? The very example of the prodigal son may suffice to convince you. Opprest by the weight of woes his misconduct had loaded him with, he resolves to return back and seek a more comfortable situation in his native abode. Here repentance begins: And how does it proceed? Why—loaded with self-detestation, horror of his faults and every sting of remorse, he undertakes the long and laborious journey in penurious circumstance, and courts all the hardships of travelling, hunger, fatigue, and cold and pain, to merit the blessing, he wish'd to obtain of a tender parent's caresses. He met it in fact at last. But the extatic joy of the paternal embraces which received him, were after all the final premium of the painful penance he underwent to obtain them. The Good-father then did receive his penitent son with joy to his arms, and, mindful no more of his revolt, rewarded his return? Yes. And thus, O penitent Christians, thus, you may depend upon it, your divine indulgent parent will receive you also into his eternal mansions: But not till, like the prodigal son, you have endured and surmounted all the tribulations and miseries which your pilgrimage in this life is strow'd with, and which are the debt you contracted by removing yourselves to such a distance from his parent arms.

Nor can I, in reality, conceive how, under the amending stripes of God, a penitent can complain; when he considers that that infinitely injured God could justly have punish'd him eternally and mercifully would not. Should a malefactor whose sentence of death is changed, by the clemency of his sovereign,

into

into the milder punishment of banishment or a prison, murmur and accuse his prince of cruelty; could you hear him with any patience? "Wretch! (would you not answer) a gibbet was thy due: And by the clemency of thy prince thou art still in the world. Thy offences call'd aloud for more than one public execution: The death of thy body and the death of thy reputation would scarce suffice to expiate thy guilt: By one act of grace thy sovereign has reprieved thee from both: And has't thou still the insolence to murmur, still the ingratitude to rage against the tender hand which has spared thee? Ah Christian Penitents! Why not reason thus on what passes between God and you? His infinit goodness changes into this sickness, that loss, this persecution, that poverty, that disappointment, that other pain, the eternal prison of the damn'd. You have multiplied sins upon sins, heap'd iniquity upon iniquity: All cry aloud against you: Vengeance! Hell? Damnation! Eternal misery! God nevertheless mercifully contents himself with so slight a revenge as a little temporal tribulation: And can you be so ungrateful, so senselessly ungrateful, as to shrink at it? Ah! for shame, break once for all with that self-love which so intoxicates you; and seriously look back, O penitent sinners, on the sins of your past ill-conducted life, and the stripes of your amending God will appear to you, not scourges but caresses: You will cry out in consoling raptures of gratitude with *St. Gregory*: "These, these are not stripes but caresses, by which with a little bodily pain, we may purify our spirit from the stains it contracted from the sensuality of the flesh." And it is even so, dearly beloved auditors. The soul which, dissolved in sincere contrition, keeps its afflicted imagination fix'd on the black ingratitude of former offences with which it insulted God, is incapable of groaning under his chastening stripes. All its sighs, all its tears, all its anguish and grief are spent, not on the evils which oppress it, but on the sins by which it deserved them. The sad remembrance of the infinit eternal love which it so long treated with contempt, of the great and good God whom it insulted, of the innumerable mercies it abused, shew the soul to itself in so black a deformity, that it regards the tender resentments of the injured deity as so many ravishing sweets, and with unconquer'd resignation, nay with heroic avidity, is disposed, to swallow the most bitter cups of earthly tribulations and disappointments.

The children of *Jacob* are sent by their aged father into *Egypt* to purchase at any cost a little succour against the famine which they groan'd under. Arrived at their journey's end, who should they apply to but to their brother *Joseph*, tho' unknown to them? However in *Joseph*, they find, no more

a brother, but a prince. Prince did I say? I had almost said a tyrant. All, kneeling in the moving posture of distress at the foot of his throne, with indignant eyes he first furveys them; then questions them with brow-beating frowns; and then, spite of the most candid humble inoffensive replies, commits them to the horrors of a dungeon, and has them loaded with fetters. Judge you now, beloved audience, what must be the stupefaction of our miserable travellers, at so strange, so severe so unexpected a reception! What a sudden tumult of every fluctuating passion must not rise in the breasts of all! What execrations of the minister's cruelty! What protestations of innocence! What bitter complaints of the hardness of their fate, of the barbarity of their treatment, of the perversity of their stars, nay of the rigour of God in permitting them to suffer thus undeservedly! *Apropos!* A melancholy reflection, rises to their aid, and keeps them from bursting with convulsive anguish; reminding them (as it often happens in like manner to others in time of affliction) of the cruelty of their conduct, but thirteen years before towards their brother *Joseph*. Hence consciously looking every-one on the others with an eye of self-condemning reproach, they wring their hands and cry out, Ah wretched We: Deservedly do we suffer these things, because we have sinn'd against our brother, seeing the distress of his soul, while he besought and we heard not: Therefore, THEREFORE IS THIS TRIBULATION COME UPON US. * Innocent are we all of the crimes laid to our charge by the *Egyptian* minister; But too, too guilty are we of having inhumanly sold our brother *Joseph*. *Joseph* thrown into the fatal cistern with a murderous intent, *Joseph* sold to the *Ismaelites* still cries out vengeance against us too loudly not to stop the ears of mercy: And justly do we sue in vain for pity to a stranger, who had no sense of pity for our own blood crying to us in the inoffensive voice of a brother." Thus did compunction speak through the lips of these penitent brethren, penitent of the crime committed against their brother *Joseph*. Thus too through our lips should contrition speak our sense of the injuries we have offer'd to God. Ah! Deservedly do we suffer these things (We all may say) because we have sinn'd against our God. What is an injury done to a brother, but a mere infantile fault, compared with the heinousness of insulting God? And shall not this reflection then suffice to sweeten every pain which may appease that God? Ah Believe me for once, says *St. Gregory*: "Comfort is of an easy acquisition, if amidst our scourges, our temptations of tribulation, we recall but to our mind the crimes by which we have merited them."

* G. 3. s. xlii.

O Christian Penitents! That you suffer, I do not doubt: But then that you have sinn'd, I cannot doubt. Just is it then that you should now suffer, as it was unjust that you should ever sin. Does your patrimony waste by swift degrees? Does every affair you undertake meet with disappointment? Has death snatch'd-away the fondled heir to all your substance, that sprightly promising youth, the prop of all your earthly hopes? Has malice thrown you out of favour with that powerful great man? Does the gout, the stone, the palsy with fetters of anguish make you prisoners in your own homes? Does persecuting envy make you exiles in your native land? And is every path you enter, every course you steer, strow'd with melancholy objects of misery? Ah! remember, you have sinn'd and must atone for it. Remember, that, rude and rugged as paths appear to you, it is through these you must pass to glory, by discounting the false pleasure of those many sensual steps you have formerly taken wide of God, and which your passions represented to your cheated imagination, as strow'd with agreeable flowers. Remember, that, as St. Paul says, * *if you be without disciplin, whereof all are made partakers, then you are spurious, and not legitimate children.* O the dreadful premise! O the more dreadful consequence! So then you must either submit to the stripes which are the common portion in this life of all the legitimate children of God, or be for ever excluded from a part in their inheritance in Heaven.

III. Be all this subscribed to for infallible truth. "Still some suffering Saint might be tempted to say, "Still might Almighty Mercy relax a little from the rigour of his treatment with regard to me, who, thanks to his all-conquering mercy, cannot accuse myself of ever having forfeited the grace he vouchsafed to bestow on me." O fortunate soul, thus qualified to speak in such an enviable stile! Ah where is thy abode? Where do'st thou conceal thyself? Where art thou to be found? Ah! make thy appearance: Shew thyself to my wishful eyes, that I may gaze on thee with pious envy and in an ecstasy of gladness shew thee to Heaven, to the world, and chiefly to the Christians who now hear me. O Blessed! Ten-thousand times thrice blessed soul! O soul beyond all earthly utterance blessed, thus to contain in an unspotted innocence all the sweet fruits of Jesu's death and passion! But O happy privileged soul (if such a one exist among mere mortals!) Why should it seem hard to thee, to like thy God in sanctity of manners, to be even like him in a life of sufferance? "Alas he scourges me (*say you?*) with too severe a hand; and without any respite or abatement discharges all the weight of his relentless scourges upon me."

* Heb. xii.

Ah faint and feeble innocence! What weight, what smart can be annex'd to the affectionate corrections of excessive love? What can'st thou have to fear from that fond arm which drew thee out of nothing, wrought a world for thee, snatch'd thee from gaping sin, shut-up from thee every avenue of hell, and keeps open for thee the gate of his own blissful kingdom? What can'st thou apprehend from hands wounded for thee, distilling blood for thee, nail'd to a shameful painful cross for thee, and still open to succour and receive thee? Can those hands load thee with temptations too heavy to bear, which suffer not any to be tempted beyond their strength? "But he conducts me through paths quite overgrown with briars and thorns." "Is there nevertheless one of those thorns which is not tinged, is not soak'd, with his blood? If he presents you with the bitter cup of earthly afflictions and plies you with gall and vinegar; Ah! why do you forget, that he is your Saviour who presents that potion to you; that Saviour, who first drank deeply of it himself before he gave you a faint taste of it, who drank of it out of pure love for you, who drank of it to teach you the love of earthly sufferings, that he might lead you enamour'd with substantial joys to that kingdom where alone they are incenter'd? Ah! think wisely once for all, and you will think with the venerable *Cassian*; "Trifling are the worst of woes we have to endure in this life, if we do but reflect on the bitter draught of sorrows, which he drank on a cross, who now invites us to a crown."

If the tribulations, O Christian innocents, which seem to you so irksome, came upon you from enemies, from hands unknown or suspect; there might be some excuse for your reluctance to bear them. Whereas, whatever secondary instruments he may think fit to make use of, the sovereign source of these blessings is God himself, your Father, the best of fathers, the tenderest the most affectionate of parents: A father, who gave you all you enjoy on earth, and prepares for you all you can hope for in heaven. Is all then which he has done and is ready to do too little to convince you, that if he causes you a little smart, it is all for love of you, all for your good? Have not you like reason with the enlighten'd St. *Augustin* to say; "O the goodness of our divine father! Let him storm as he please, still is he our father: Let him scourge us, let him afflict us, let him crush us, still does he prove a father." The few tears with which he condescended to bathe the sepulchre of *Lazarus* were so sufficient a proof of the love he had for him, that the very populace could cry out; *Behold how he loved him!* And shall so much precious blood, as he has shed for you, not finish to

* St. John xi.

convince

convince you how greatly he loves you? Nay shall not the very tribulations, with which he tries you, more than suffice to remove from you every doubt of the excess of his love for you? Especially when his Apostle assures you that they are the standard proofs of his saving affection for his elect. HE SCOURGES EVERY CHILD, *says St. Paul.* * "Ah! What children does he scourge, *says the apostle St. Augustin?* What children? Those children who are dearest to him: Those children whom he loves with most tender affection: Those children for whom he most anxiously prepares eternal advantages. *Every child whom he receiveth.*" In a word the ELECT. "Ah! what children, *says he again?*---Why---Among the rest that beloved Son, *in whom he was well pleased,* the necessary object of his eternal love, his only-begotten son, his impeccable, innocent son, his son Jesus . . . Yes, Christians; his only son, the only one without sin, but not his only one in exemption from pain." If then, Christians, you have a certainty, that God loves you; that it is he who sends you the pains you feel; that he sends them for your advantage; and that, in sending them, he does you no less an honour than putting you upon a level with his only-begotten; can you deny that every groan you fetch, every the least complaint, is a shameful want of acknowledgment to God?

But! What am I saying? After all, who can be so pitiless as even barely to think of requiring sufferers to stifle their groans? The anguish, which, wholly pent-up in a human breast, has no vent through the senses, is too insupportable for life to subsist long under it: And to separate from afflictions the solace of lamentation is robbing the afflicted of every relief. Well then: Be it e'en allowed to the wretched to bemoan their condition. But ah dearest Christian sufferers! Never permit your afflictions so to bereave you of discretion as to prostitute your complaints where they are neither sure to move compassion, nor likely to procure redress. And see you not that it would be wasting your sighs and spending your spirits in vain, to breath-out your grievances any-where else but at the feet of your crucified lord, who alone is ready and able to relieve you? But what advice am I giving? Strange inadvertence! O my suffering love! O my dear wounded bleeding agonizing Saviour! Is it possible, that, in thy presence, in sight of thy pangs, we can even feel the weight of our inferior woes? In sight of such and so many wounds and sores and rents and bruises and injuries and insults, can we be so delicate as to repine at the trivial evils which befall us? Is there in this or gratitude, or justice? Or love for thee, or for ourselves?

O Christian innocents then! To the presence of

* Heb. xii.

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this crucified Redeemer let me cite you all with all your load of woes. Compare your pains with his, your wounds with his, your ignominy with his, your blood with his: And then, in the name of justice, if the balance weighs on your sides, even give a loose to sighs, complaints and discontents. More innocent than him I cannot think you: Yet, if your ill-treatment out-weighs his; we'll strike the balance. But, if I look on him; I behold him naked: Ah! say: Has poverty yet vented all its rage on you and urged you to a like extreme? --- But! I behold him not only naked, but all wounds and sores and bruises from head to foot: Say, have sickness, falls, or stripes, or other accidents yet handled you so roughly? --- But! I survey him nail'd pendent on an infamous tree between two thieves: Say, has persecution push'd you as yet to such a shameful painful end? Are the affronts or injuries or insults you are compell'd to put-up-with equal in number, weight or measure, to his opprobrious treatment? Ah! why then, if they are not, do you not blush at your past delicacy? Why does not a holy emulation spur you forward after him, and force you every-one, in reparation of that delicacy, to cry out eagerly with DAVID: "Behold, O Lord, *I am prepared for thy scourges?* No more, sweet lord, shall thy paternal scourges meet with reluctance in my affections. No, no: In proof of my fidelity to thee; behold me not only ready, but desirous to receive the stripes. Depart from me, seditious rebel thoughts, depart: In vain shall you henceforth murmur and repine; resolved is this heart, and *I am prepared for scourges.* No more let it be said, that my Saviour courted an excruciating hunger with a fast of forty days from every food and every earthly comfort; and I repine at the denial of superfluities, and luxury during the like space. Shall Christ, for my sake, have suffer'd the rude insults of diabolic rage; and, trampling on the soft allurements of a deceitful world, have embraced with joy a naked poor inglorious life, concluded with a painful ignominious death; and I, breathing nothing but temporal enjoyment and fallacious ease, shrink at the moderate share he deigns to give me in his sufferings? No, no; rebellious nature, no: *I am prepared for the tender scourges of my God:* And never shalt thou henceforth make me doubt but that, what seems to thee severity, is pure excess of love in God for thee his useless creature. He, my soul, is bent on saving thee, on leading thee to Paradise: And ill does it become thee to prescribe the way by which he shall conduct thee thither. Behold me, O my God, behold me ready, nay anxious for thy Heaven. Behold me *prepared for thy scourges.* Conduct me through whatever path thou wilt; behold, I follow. Let it be thick with

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"briars to tear me piece-meal; strow it, line it, with the acutest thorns: That precious blood of thine, with which thou has't soften'd them, shall blunt their edge to me: Happy, thrice happy, if by their means I may at last arrive at the eternal glory to which they lead."

O dearly beloved Christians! Thus would you reason all, if you but gave your reason its due superiority over prejudice and passion. But, alas, you see not through the eyes of your reason; and therefore hood-wink'd by your senses, you look with the livid eyes of envy on every-one who, to outward appearance, seems but to be happy and at ease; and murmur at your destiny for every little affliction which happens to you. Whereas, O! how different would the emotions of your souls be; would you but carry your reflections a little beyond the bounds you confine them to. The light and momentary tribulations, which now seem to you so insupportable, are they not pregnant with eternal pleasures? What then have you to do with those tears which roll so plentiful along your cheeks? What means that sullen melancholy settled on your brow? What cause gives birth to those heart-rending sobs which rise so ready in every contradicting circumstance? Know you the deep designs of all-disposing Providence? Why then repine at passing evils, which shall one day excite the reasonable envy of those whom now with misplaced jealousy you mistake for happy; and for which you will find cause eternally to thank and praise and bless your gracious God, who, out of his boundless bounty, deigns to think you worthy of these proofs of his excessive love?

Notorious to you all, beloved auditors, are the adventures of the antient patriarch *Joseph*. As yet a tender youth, his brethren, animated by jealousy, consult the means to rid themselves of him; and completing the unnatural resolution with a precipitate execution they strip him of his garments and sell him to a band of *Ismaelites*. O! Who can describe, so well as conceive, the anguish of the persecuted youth under his afflicting circumstance? Who can number the tears he shed to mollify the flinted hearts of his inhuman brethren? The vows he offer'd to *Heaven* to draw down his deliverance? How does he prostrate himself first to one then to another of the tyrant brothers; cling to their knees in a flood of tears; wring his hands; call on the name of their common father; plead the ties of their common blood; ask pardon; promise submission; conjure the milder *Ismaelites* to renounce their pretensions; conjure his brethren to renounce their hatred; conjure *Heaven* to mollify their hearts! What does he not say? What does he not do? What does he not try to avert the guilty injury offer'd to him? But ah! He would have spared all this fruitless labour; he would have spared

all this groundless anguish; had but one prophetic thought helped him to a foresight of what his present affliction was big with. Ah *Joseph*! Simple childish *Joseph*! Do'st thou know what thou art weeping for? Do'st thou know what thou art suing for? Unfortunate would thy petition have been, if *Heaven* condescended to it. For had'st thou but seen what the dreaded exile was to end in, thyself would have wept only with compassion on thy weakness in grieving at it. Leave then, leave thy cruel brethren to their perversity. Little do they think, that, selling thee to slavery they are purchasing for thee a diadem. Away, away with those tears which would rob thee of power, dignity and empire. Leave them all and follow cheerfully whither merciful providence leads. Know and be assured, however rugged and unpleasant the road may appear, it is safe and happy travelling where God is the conductor.

What the spirit of prophesy might have said to *Joseph*, faith, unerring faith, says daily to every one of you. O the spacious kingdom of ecstatic bliss! O the resplendent crown of interminable glory promised to afflicted fortitude, in numberless passages of holy-writ! Enough is it to say that nothing less than *Heaven* is the promised reward. And still shall we find difficulty not only to suffer with joy, but even to suffer with patience? Still shall we shew horror and repugnance for those trivial temptations of tribulations, with which our eternal all-gracious parent vouchsafes to try us and fit us for his glory, as knowing that we never shall attain to it without them? Nay still shall we not only shrink at the scourges of our tender divine parent, but even flee every voluntary mortification and self-denial, and fly in the face of God's church whenever she prescribes us either?

"But could not God (you'll say) secure *Heaven* to us at a cheaper rate? Could not he find means to save us, more easy to the sense, more grateful to our inclinations?" Doubtless he could have found such: But he has not. And with what authority or arrogance shall reptil man presume to ask him, why he did not? The eternal father could have found them for his beloved, only, guiltless son: And yet he left him subject to cold, to hunger, to pain, to infamy to death and every external temptation, and made it necessary for *Christ* to suffer and so to enter into his glory.* What injury then or hardship have we to complain of, in that the same eternal father should make our condition echo to that of his divine son with a like necessity, and require that *We* also, by many tribulations, should enter into the kingdom of God? † Horrid perversity! The son of God shall have wrought the most stupendous of all miracles in the hypostatic union of his divine nature with ours, merely for the sake of

* St. Luke xxiv. † Acts xiv.

suffering for us: And we shall arrogantly presume to want miracles to exempt us from suffering for our benefit? Yet O Christians; is that miracle at your own disposal, and it consists in no more than this: Wisely, prevent your sufferings with the desire of suffering, and you may blunt the edge of them. But on the contrary to pray God not to afflict you, would be in you, O sinners, the praying him to give you up a prey to Satan: In you, O penitents, it would be soliciting the eternal punishments which he thereby saves you from: In you, O just, it would be importuning your divine parent to love you with less tenderness, with a lesser degree of affection: And in all of you, O dear loved Christians who hear me, it would be practically beseeching God to diminish your eternal bliss; to eclipse, perhaps, one half of your future glory. Ah! Believe me: If you love God never ask him such a favour. Believe me: If God loves you intensely he will never grant it. We must then in this life suffer to the end, and suffer without comfort? Yes, we must. We have God's gracious promise: Thanks to him for it. *The world shall rejoice, but you shall be made sad.** Yet, Christians, I say again, all the comfort necessary is in your own reach. Ah! One spark of pure love for God: One spark of just love for yourselves; and your sorrow shall be turn'd into joy. Love but God above all things: Love yourselves enough to aspire to the enjoyment of him; and I pronounce you triumphant over every tribulation. Pray that you enter not into internal temptation; watch that you enter not into those external temptations which are in league with your corrupt nature, and manfully suffer the same Spirit of divine love to lead you to the encounter of temptations of tribulation, by which Jesus was led into the desert to be tempted by them; and, by the assistance of God's grace, you shall share in his victory, whose example you endeavour to imitate. And that you may be the better prepared for the sufferings which God shall please to send you, inure yourselves to the love of suffering by previous mortification and penance. Instead of studiously seeking means and excuses to wave the mortification and self-denial, which your holy mother the church prescribes to you in this holy penitential time of Lent; embrace them with joy, practice them with fervor, and improve them with supererogating ingenuity. A little sincere love for God and yourselves will render the task not only easy but delightful. It is your present as well as future interest to have that love. "It is your interest to love, says St. Augustin. For no labours are burdensome to lovers, but on the contrary afford delight." It is even so, Christians: Love is strong as death, and nothing is so difficult which love cannot surmount. O! How sweet must it not be to obey and suffer

* St John xvi.

out of sympathy. A darling babe is not a lighter burden to a fond mother who gives it suck, than the most heavy grievance in this life to him who passionately loves his God and his own soul. Love God then, Christian souls: Once more, ere I conclude, I say, Love God and love yourselves; and the acutest pains, the sharpest tribulations, shall yield you comfort even in this life, and work you an eternal crown of never ending bliss and glory in the life to come. Which I beseech God, &c. In the name, &c.

First INDICATION of the PASSION.

IN grief, when arrived to the degree of excess, revered auditors, there appears a certain something of such majestic solemnity which all who behold must observe, tho' none can find terms or colours to describe it. I can only say, that it commands or rather forces respect, and with irresistible sway reigns despotic sovereign over the most obdurate hearts. It has all the eloquence of the most pathetic words without the help of expression, and every prerogative of power, in it's utmost impotence. It melts tyranny into tenderness, cruelty into compassion, and inhumanity into sympathetic mercy. In a word, sole substitute of providence in time of need, it dignifies distress with a kind of arbitrary power over the means of relief: Witness an instance which history affords us. The Emperor Domitian, no matter how, incurr'd the implacable hatred of the people of Rome: A hatred which nothing less would suffice to satiate than the massacre of the hated sovereign. The emperor dead, judge you whether, or not, they who lost all respect for him, while living and in actual possession of sovereign authority, were capable of observing any respect for the Empress his widow, whose imperial authority expired with the life of her imperial lord. And yet what the eminence of her station could not, the dignity of her sorrow obtain'd. In this melancholy circumstance she appears in the senate and demands satisfaction and justice for the barbarous deed. The solemn majesty of her appearance, which unborrow'd from the grandeur of her birth and elevated condition, ow'd all it's efficacy to magnanimous distress, carried with it a venerable dejection; such a dejection as created not only pity but reverence, not only sympathetic pain but irresistible awe in her beholders. The uninvited tears, which flowing from a sea of sorrow in her breast, roll'd like the streams of a rapid torrent, down her distressful cheeks, were sincere interpreters of her energetic silence; and the thick-rising sobs which for some time forbid her voice it's utterance, far more insinuating than all the eloquence of loud-tongued lamentations, pierced to the heart of every sullen senator and previously secured to her the boon

she had to crave, ere she could summon words to ask it. As soon however as conquer'd anguish recoils within her, to make way for expression; her soul, divided amidst the tumultuous passions of love and hatred, rage and pity, revenge and tenderness, breathes-forth, in broken unconnected accents, the purport of her scarcely half-form'd wishes. Such the dilemma of a distracted matron, when unnaturally widow'd of the tender husband she valued as her life and widow'd by the inhuman parricide of her own children whom she prizes more than life: Such the disconsolate situation of our empress. All then she demands, when grief and cruelty permit her to express her demands, is the liberty to gather up the scatter'd remains of her butcher'd lord, yet nakedly exposed in the common streets to all the rude insults of a merciless populace, that she may give them an honourable burial.---And how could so meek, so merciful, so modest, so melting a petition of guiltless dignity in the deepest distress, possibly meet with a refusal even from savages?---In reality it met with none ---Her request then obtain'd as soon as signified, she sends out her domestics through the town respectfully to take up the disfigured members of mangled majesty, wherever dispersed; and, thus rescued from riotous irreverence, she causes them to be placed on the summit of the *Capitol*, the most conspicuous place in all *Rome*, that in view of this spectacle of daring cruelty, every accomplice in the bloody fact, might shrink at the black treason, and conceive a just horror of the enormity of his guilt. "I will try, *She cries*, "if perchance I may not, by this means, render the image of their barbarity for ever present to their eyes; that their tortured imagination may never cease to keep their consciences awake to penitential remorse: In a word, that, never forgetting the exorbitance of their crime, they may incessantly preserve, in this monument of my grief, the racking sting of their own guilt and infamy."

The church, beloved, is now in deep mourning on a like afflicting occasion. The cause of her just affliction is such as renders her distress more, infinitely more affecting than that of any mortal ever was or can be. Her divine spouse has been assassinated, inhumanly assassinated; and you, O Christians, you and I among the rest have lent our crimes to the bloody parricide. It is true, that the unnatural deed has been long since effected; and there are now almost eighteen centuries, that she

has been widow'd of the delight of her soul. But as a loss without measure can deserve nothing less than a grief without end, the annual reversion of a mournful memorial is the least tribute due to the excess of her woe. The time of this memorial is return'd, and the cause of that mournful dress she appears in at this sacred time, is the renewal of the horror she has ever retain'd for the outrageous decide. It is hard indeed to say which afflicts her the most, the remembrance of injured innocence, or the sight of your guilt. Her love for her divine spouse calls aloud for the punishment of so unnatural a butchery, and yet the love she still bears to you as her children sues for mercy on the butchers. Thus torn, thus divided by contrasting affections, what remedy can be applied to her griefs? To do however what is in my power to afford her relief, I purpose on next *Good-Friday*, mentally to gather up the sad relics of the precious body of her divine spouse, in a mournful contemplation of his passion; in which I shall go in spirit to all the places where he was ill-treated, and take-up, as I go on, as many of the precious drops of his blood as I may. At the *Praetorium* and other places I shall collect the treasures of sacred flesh, which were torn from his blessed frame: And when I have bathed them a little with your tears and my own from the prophane dirt which our sins have thrown on them, I shall expose them to the view of all penitent sinners; and shall endeavour to fix the image of his mangled body in your imagination, that, resting ever present to your memory, it may make way to every heart which is not impenetrable, and remain there for life. In short, my purpose in so doing is, that such as by mortal sin have contributed to this parricide, may, by having always before them the object of their crimes, conceive a just horror of them, and never lose sight of the matter of an endless contrition.

Such then of you, Christians, as are not afraid of breaking with sin and *Satan*, endeavour to be present at the moving interesting scene. Murmur not at the labour; nor grudge for one day to share in the dying pains of him who thought it not too much to die for you. And if the thought of sharing in his pains should terrify your delicacy, cheer up your self-love with the reflection on the glory and felicity which that day's meditation may cause you to share in, with him, in the kingdom of heaven.

S E R M O N

On the SECOND SUNDAY in LENT.

St. MATTHEW xvii. 4.

Lord! It is good for us to be here: If thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias.

IF in my last sermon I had an impotent enemy to triumph over; in this, Christians, I have a formidable foe to encounter. If the tribulations of this life are a temptation, as undoubtedly they are, they are also profitable to endure and easy to surmount: And therefore may they, not only be grappled-with, but coveted. But the pleasures of this life are temptations of a very different kind, detrimental to the spirit in their very nature, and extremely difficult to conquer: Therefore ought they not only to be resisted but shun'd. Temporal afflictions are external temptations; so are temporal pleasures: But there is this great difference between them. The former are in perpetual war with our passions; the latter keep a treacherous correspondence with them. The former are the more easy to resist, as yourselves are naturally disposed to consider them as enemies: The latter are so much the more dangerous to encounter, as there is no persuading you to apprehend any enmity from them. The very first advances of tribulation you are so very watchful of your own accord to keep wide-of, that there is little cause to fear your ever being over-power'd by the excesses of it: Whereas such is your eagerness, not to conquer, but to court present enjoyment, that even when it flees from your approaches, you endeavour to cut off it's retreat; and with pusillanimous meanness surrender to it at discretion, without fighting, nay without parley. Therefore is there every cause to fear your ruin in it's remotest advances. The arrows which are foreseen either wound not at all or wound not so deeply: But the dart which is levell'd in the dark seldom fails to aim surely and to penetrate quite home. Tribulations are like generous enemies who declare open war and march to the attack in battle array; but earthly pleasures are like those dastardly traitors who lurk in ambush to convey destruction in disguise: *They prepare*, as the Psalmist expresses it,

They prepare their arrows in the quiver, that they may shoot at the upright of heart. Those tempt us only by attacking us from without; but these, while they outwardly besiege our hearts by slow and cover'd approaches, carry-on a traiterous correspondence with our sensual appetites within, in order to surprise and betray us. The vigorous assaults of those, the more furiously they assail us, the more do they urge us to confirm or renew our dependence upon God; but these, by soothing us into an insensibility of our danger, wean us from every dependence on God to make us abject slaves to the world: Those, in a word, by shewing us in our littleness and insufficiency the necessity of recurring to the protection of the divine grace, bring us oftentimes back to an intimate alliance with JESUS CHRIST; but these by filling us with self-confidence and inebriating us with presumption block-up our souls from every application to Christ and his grace. An instance of both, we have in the apostles themselves, the disciples with Jesus in their boat put out to sea under favour of a prosperous gale of wind: But no sooner are they got high in the ocean, than the fair weather, like all earthly prosperity, deserting them, shews itself only a decoy to the horrors which succeed. A furious tempest arises, the billows swell, the adverse winds blow hard, the vessel bulges and the scared Apostles, really absent in thought to Christ who was but seemingly asleep to them, tremble for their own safety. Each acts his part; and all with one accord combine to exert their little art, to baffle the rude elements. But all in vain: The more they row and sweat and toil, the greater grows the danger with the encreasing storm: And they, mean-while, depending still upon their little arts and industry, forget the Heavenly majesty they are freighted with, as much as if he was not with them, till their distress augmenting with their danger alarms them to their safety, and shews them in their impotence the necessity of applying for relief to him alone who had the power to afford it. Their tribulation it was then which spurr'd them to apply to him, with that famous *Lord save us we perish.* * In this Gospel, we find

* St. Matth. viii.

the same Disciples absorb'd in raptures of temporal delight at the sight of our Lord's transfiguration on the mount: And what effect does it work in them? Why.---instead of lifting their souls in amorous aspirations to that celestial bliss of which their present sensitive transports of joy were but a faint foretaste, it depresses their spirits to the pleasures of the earth, weighs them down with groveling desires of continuing their present fleeting satisfaction, and links their affections to terrestrial enjoyment: inso-much that, forgetful of the nobler pretensions they have to the permanent felicity which attends them in Heaven, they consider as a greater good the establishing their present pleasure upon earth. *Lord! It is good for us to be here.* Nay so strongly are they attach'd to the actual enjoyment which transports their feeble senses, that they are even for bringing Heaven to protract it, by offering to erect tabernacles to the honour of Christ and his saints. *If thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias.* Thus capable are the most innocent enjoyments of this life of making us lose sight of the more solid felicity of Heaven. But lose sight *did I say?* Rather should I have said, they are capable of making every thing which is heavenly a matter of terror to us, as they did to the Apostles: Who, instead of rising from the lethargy into which their transient tranquillity had lull'd them, and soaring with extacies of amorous love to Heaven at the melodious sound of the divine voice through the luminous cloud, *fell upon their face and were sore afraid.* It is true their pleasure was of the most innocent sort; inasmuch as it owed all it's being to the miraculous unction of Heaven. But it was still earthly sensitive pleasure, which they could not enjoy a perpetuation of without renouncing the more substantial pleasure of heavenly bliss, which was to succeed it: And therefore tho' innocent it was dangerous and ill-judged to fix their hearts to it. In fact, the Holy Ghost tells us, by the mouth of St. Mark, in their justification, that, desiring the continuation of that dangerous tho' innocent pleasure on the mount, *they knew not what they said.**

After what has been said then, who can doubt, Christians, but that earthly pleasures are of all external temptations the most dangerous to salvation, because of all the most treacherous, and not only always difficult to conquer but even detrimental to sustain, on account of the close correspondence they keep-up with our senses and sensual appetites? After having then taken some pains to arm you against the attacks of temporal tribulations, I should provide but slenderly for your spiritual safety, if I left you exposed to the lurking enmity of earthly pleasures. Give me leave then to put you on your guard against these false and formidable (tho' feeble)

* St. Mark ix.

traitors to the soul, by shewing you that all the joys of this life are both formidable and feeble at once. They are formidable in their friendship; but extremely feeble in their enmity. When they soothingly approach us, in the guise of friends, to gain admittance into our hearts; then it is that they are the most to be dreaded: But when they keep aloof, and, by breaking-off all intercourse with us, seem to declare open war with us; then it is that they have less power to hurt us. In short, what I mean to convince you of is,

- I. That there is the greatest danger in giving earthly pleasures admittance into our hearts: Because they are inconsistent with present happiness and obstructive to future felicity: *And*
- II. That the great art of rendering them useful is, to mistrust their approaches and to renounce every internal intercourse with them from the very beginning.

“ Almighty Lord of Heaven and Earth, who
 “ has't prepared for us a kingdom of eternal infinite
 “ delights transcending every power of sense on
 “ earth to feel or to describe! Permit us not to for-
 “ feit them for any sordid fleeting pleasure of this
 “ life. No: But since thou has't given us souls
 “ too great by nature to be fill'd with aught
 “ but thy substantial glory; keep out of them
 “ whatever may obstruct the plenitude of that.
 “ Make every transient pleasure tasteless to us; and
 “ restless as thou has't made our hearts on earth,
 “ vouchsafe to keep them so, till they repose in
 “ thee our only happiness and rest.”

I. That the pleasures of the earth should tempt us it is no wonder: And to shun the temptation entirely, is absolutely impossible while we remain in this flesh. Our very existence is center'd in the midst of temporal pleasures: Let us turn our senses whither-ever we will, pleasing objects present themselves before us: let us fix our abode in the city or in the desert, there will never be wanting matter of earthly enjoyment to allure our senses and flatter our imagination with the promise of mighty pleasure, in order to gain admittance in our hearts. And here lies all the danger. While we keep our hearts free from every attachment to them, all the objects around us can only tempt us externally but can never injure or endanger us. But if once we open our hearts to them and give way to the flattering sensations they endeavour to affect us with; adieu to all our temporal happiness: Adieu to our eternal safety. Adieu to peace and innocence.

But what! Is not earthly pleasure one kind of earthly felicity? How then can earthly pleasure exist without earthly felicity? Ah Christians! How? The pleasures of the earth are but the appearance of felicity,

felicity, a mere decoy to overthrow that Christian peace, which only can subsist in the immediate union of the soul with God. And if they did not put on the appearance of felicity, they would not be the traitors they are. The danger then lies in trusting to the false appearances of earthly pleasures, which carry ever with them the obstruction of all solid happiness even in this life. Without peace there is no happiness and there are no earthly enjoyments capable of affording one minute's peace. Power, sensual delight, vain praises, and sordid lucre are the grand pleasures which flatter mankind with the promise of happiness, they have not to give.

Abfalom was one melancholy instance of this truth. The gaudy trappings of regal authority present themselves to his cheated imagination in the borrow'd dress of happiness. The homage render'd to his royal parent, the splendid palace, the gay appearance of a numerous court of nobles, the sumptuous entertainments, the beauteous train of concubines, the chosen bands of music, the flattery, obedience, and cheerful services of a whole populous nation; All which seem the inseparable attendants of the throne: All smiling promise him, in the possession of them, the endless enjoyment of unbounded happiness. But ah fond, unexperienced youth! Trust not to the gay illusion. The happiness which thou pursue'st is but a phantom rose, the surrounding thorns of which are real, tho' passion screens them from thy observation. But! To what purpose parley with a man whose senses are abandon'd to the discretion of sycophancy? The traitor-prospect flatters him, and he foolishly yields his heart to it's deceit. In a word, *Abfalom*, charm'd into compliance, accepts the deluding invitations of sovereign power, and parts with peace, with honour, with happiness and life. O the anxieties which now torment him! O the tumults, which fear and hope, and doubt and daringness raise in his hurried mind! Nature with all the eloquence of blood exerts her voice to shock his yet unhardened heart; while bold ambition labours to stagnate every emotion of remorse. Care now takes place of calm serenity; and every incident which favours or obstructs the rash pursuit, rends him alike between the racking thoughts of probability and incertainty. Gloomy suspicion, black enmity and peace-destroying danger rob him of every interval of inaction which offers rest. A father dethroned, expell'd from his metropolis, and persecuted even to death by an unnatural faction of his raising, tortures his conscience, stings his soul and lodges a gnawing viper in his breast. A father yet existing, yet living in the hearts of the sounder part of his people, a fond father basely injured and who one day, by sudden turn of fortune, may be able to punish the unnatural rebellion, is a consuming worm which rel-

even insolent ambition of content. No matter, *Abfalom*: No matter, ambitious youth. Thou has't gone too far now to make a safe retreat. All must be hazarded, now all has been attempted. Even take possession of the royal city, e'en seize the royal concubines, and hazard a decisive battle to rid thyself, in the death of an obnoxious parent, of every obstacle to the happiness thou aspiest to. Who knows but that the power which, at so much cost of peace, deceives thee in thy pursuit of it, may over-pay thee in the possession? "But---possession!" *metbinks I bear him cry in melancholy soliloquy,* "possession! Would I were sure of that! That would repay me every torture, the attempt has cost me. O that I never had attempted, or that I might be sure of the desired success! But Ah! Who can assure me of success? Who can assure me that these unnatural rebels, who basely second my ambition, will not as treacherously betray the Son as they have done the Father? O cursed, cursed lust of power! O flattering false ambition! O that I had trusted less to thy deceitful promises, and never given thee admittance into this heart! What cares, what dangers, difficulties, hardships and perplexities had I been still a stranger to? What tho' I should usurp my father's crown; has he not yet an army of faithful subjects at his command to strip me of it! What tho' that army be but small; has he not yet the voice of nature, justice, love and gratitude and pity to raise him daily fresh recruits? What tho' I seize the present opportunity of my superior forces to hazard a decisive battle? If fortune should declare against me; lo! All my towering hopes are overthrown. And if I gain the guilty victory, can royal power cancel royal guilt, or silence the blood of my assassinated parent? Can all the charms of monarchy stifle that rancorous remorse, with which the yet unperpetrated parricide already rends my soul and robs me of all quiet? But, hush, intruding reason! Thou comest too late. Ambition must be gratified." But Ah the miserable ambitious youth! Had he but yielded to the voice of reason; had he refused admittance; or, once admitted, chased from his heart in time the traitorous illusion; what misery and shame and vengeance might he not have escaped? But lust of power deceived him with the false magic of apparent happiness, to court it's seeming smiles; and like an *Ignis Fatuus*, after leading him through every maze of misery, at the expence of peace, of honour, of conscience, rest and safety, the gay illusion ended in a shameful death. So vain is it to seek even earthly peace and happiness in the pursuit of power.

"But why so, you'll say? *Abfalom* pursued it in an unlawful manner, and therefore no wonder never

"he never attain'd to the possession of it. But is that any argument that the possession of power is not attended with earthly happiness?" I answer: *Abalom* was, in all probability, in a fair way to obtain it. His disappointment then is at least an argument that the pursuit of earthly power is at best but precarious; and therefore it can never be prudent or safe to renounce the solid felicity of present peace of mind and conscience, to pursue the uncertain possession of power, in which we never can promise ourselves happiness, however innocently we may possess it. *DAVID* himself possess'd it not only splendidly but innocently, since he received it from God himself; and yet with what cares what toils, what dangers, what perplexities, was not his possession of power embitter'd? This then, with the instance I have just given you in the rebellion of the unhappy *Abalom*, may suffice to convince you, Christians, that, whatever appearances earthly power ever so eagerly pursued, or ever so lawfully obtain'd, may assume, it is generally inconsistent with real felicity even in this life: Since peace subsides where power advances. Ah dearest auditors! Why then so anxious to lord it over your fellow creatures? Why so restless to obtain this post, to solicit that employ, to arrive at that charge? Surely you forget that disheartening truth of the Holy-Ghost: *The powerful shall be powerfully tormented.* * Believe me then, that, even in a natural sense, the pleasing prospects, with which distant power endeavours to tempt our ambition, are a very dangerous temptation which levels at nothing less than the intire destruction of our felicity in this life, as well as our eternal happiness in the next.

The royal *DAVID* however, tho' burden'd with the weight of monarchy and the load of a vigorous war, enjoy'd for one while a profound tranquillity within himself: A tranquillity which was not the gift of power, but of the good use he made of a power possess'd without attachment. In this state of serenity it was that, taking the air one day on the top of his palace, he unhappily beheld the wanton *Bathsbeba* bathing herself in her domestic bath. The unexpected scene attracts the unguarded king's attention; he approaches nearer, and eagerly surveys the beauteous dangerous flattering deceitful object; And soon the distant prospect swells in his inflamed imagination with improving promises of unalloy'd delight to every sense, till sensual delectation, in close intelligence with his concupiscential faculties steals undiscover'd, unsuspected, to his yielding heart and takes intire possession of it. O fatal, fatal curiosity! O what changes of scene does this one treacherous scene produce! No more can we see in *David* that steady peaceful noble calm, of conscience which sweetens princely care and renders every burden light. No more appears in court

* *Wis. vi.*

gay guiltless conversation heighten'd by communicative innocence in a royal pattern. But all is now dark mystery, intrigue, perplexity and secret scheme, how to compleat the black design, without disgrace or danger. Now sovereign prerogative insolently argues for oppression; then conscious guilt, in league with fear of treachery and secret vengeance from an exasperated injured subject, rages with destructive jealousy: And base adultery must be repair'd with baser massacre. O hapless monarch! How grossly did not the flattering prospect of sensual delight deceive thee? How dearly did'st thou not purchase a few giddy minutes of fulsome pleasure? O what fears, what doubts, what jealousies, what hopes tormented thee in the pursuit! O what guilt, what mistrusts what shame, what restlessness, what disappointment and remorse did not attend on thee in the possession! O what crimes! O what punishments! O what endless repentance and penance! But ah deluded prince! Happy for thee it was that the illusion ended in repentance: Else had thy temporal scourges been succeeded by eternal vengeance: Else to the loss of peace and innocence and rest and temporal happiness thou would'st have added the loss of everlasting happiness, the loss of God for all eternity. Such, beloved auditors, such are the fruits which sensual pleasure is big with, to those whom it decoys into an attachment to it, with specious flattering promises of what it never has to give.

But flattery of every kind is impotent and barren of good. Whatever sensitive titillation we may conceive or promise to ourselves from public praises, it's consequences are generally fatal. The natural tendency of praise, or just or groundless, is to puff us up with pride and vain presumption of ourselves which seldom fails to hurry us unguardedly to ruin; by urging us to such pursuits as rob us, while we are intent upon them, of peace, of rest, and oftentimes of virtue, even where they succeed: And where our enterprizes miscarry, we are sure of losing our fame or substance, or at least our time, and of still remaining wider of happiness than before. What lost poor *Abalom* but the empty praises of a flattering tribe of courtiers, whose sycophancy in all probability first bewitch'd him with the lust of sovereign power? O vain *Nebuchadonazor*! O insolent vain-glorious monarch! Had'st thou never given admittance in thy heart to the deceitful attractives of unavailing praise; would'st thou ever, by aspiring to divine honours, have sunk thyself to the infamous society of beasts? No, Christians, no: It was the love of praise and vain esteem which stripp'd that vain Prince of honour, power, ease and peace and happiness. And 'tis the same which intoxicates the major part of Christians, and plunging them into inextricable labyrinths of error, widens them daily more and more even from the happiness of

of this life; which they so eagerly yearn-after but seek in vain, by seeking every where but where it may be found.

You, I know, O misers, think yourselves the surest of success in the pursuit of earthly pleasures. You imagin all earthly enjoyment center'd in the accumulation of wealth: And the daily success of your frauds and the swelling heaps which your growing avarice produces are substantial proofs with you, that you are not mistaken. But ah self-deluding wretches! In what does your happiness consist? In starving amidst abundance? In toiling for others, and reaping no comfort or advantage from your toils? Does happiness consist in the bare restless, sleepless, laborious vain pursuit of it? Ah! Who then in his senses would covet to be happy, if labour in vain is all which is meant by being happy? Examine but the conduct of a man of avarice, Christians: And what more inconsistent? What pains he takes to improve the sordid substance which engrosses his affections! What weary steps! What unwearied assiduity in his affairs to purchase cheap, to sell with gross advantage! What sweats! What lengthened watches! What rigorous abstemiousness! What hunger, thirst and cold, and want of necessities, shall he not spontaneously endure to rake together the sordid glittering filth he feasts his eyes on and centers all his pleasure in! And to what end? To grasp at happiness in the possession of it. And does he ever reach that happiness? He reach it? No, his avarice with his hoard encreases. The more he gains the more he is in want of all things: And that detested narrowness of soul which first induced him, with the deceitful promises of future rest, to seek his sovereign felicity in riches, will not permit him to enjoy them when acquired, but keeps him ever on the rack of eagerness for more; tortures him with a thousand fears of being robb'd, deceived, assassinated; gnaws him with ten thousand apprehensions of lessening that stock he gladly would but cannot carry with him to another world; grinds him with unnumber'd fears of living yet to want; and in the midst of plenty starves him with fear of being starved. Tell me, O Christians, how vain are not the toils of such a wretch to reach felicity; who, in his ill contrived pursuit, lives all his minutes, in this life, a stranger to peace, to ease, to sleep, to rest, to comfort, joy and every reasonable enjoyment: Lives, in a word, or rather dies, in every instant of his existence here, an agonizing life or lingering death; and dies only to be buried in Hell, only to conclude a life of voluntary wretchedness with involuntary everlasting death? What charms then are there in earthly power, sensual delight, unfruitful praise or sordid lucre, to justify or even to excuse our rashness in yielding our hearts to their deceitful invitations?

But, You'll answer me: "This is not the fault
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" of earthly pleasures in themselves, but of us in
" using them with criminal attachment or seeking
" them with guilty methods. We own that every
" pleasure of this earth must cease to be such, from
" the moment it opposes innocence or virtue. But
" surely there are pleasures in this life which may
" be possess'd, nay pursued with a safe unfulled con-
" science. And surely innocent enjoyments whe-
" ther seated in power, sensitive delight or fame or
" riches, can neither be obnoxious to our temporal
" nor to our eternal happiness." But hold, be-
" lov'd, hold. There is egregious sophistry in this.
Doubtless there is no evil in the pleasures them-
selves nor in the enjoyment of them, if they be pos-
sessed with innocence and peace; or God would not
have created them for man. But the grand diffi-
culty lies in the art of pursuing or possessing them
with peace or innocence. Since the fall of man,
such is the corruption of our nature and such the
intelligence which that corruption keeps up with
every earthly pleasure, that it is morally impossible
to pursue, or to possess, many of those pleasures with-
out more or less detriment to conscience. And yet
I will allow, that, as I have already shewn you in
the foregoing instances, there are some few remains
of pleasure left not beyond the reach of Christian
virtue but what they may be pursued and even
possessed in some degree without prejudice to virtue.
A prince for example may without a crime take
possession of the crown, which is devolved to him
by inheritance or free election, and may dispute it
with an unjust intruder. A Nobleman or plebeian
may aspire to a post or charge or dignity for which
he is qualified, so his pursuit be carried on by
lawful methods. A married person may with safe-
ty indulge the sensitive appetites in matrimonial
pleasures with prudence decency and temperance.
All men may, and few men fail to, be desirous of
a good reputation: And every man is bound by
virtuous means to labour to establish his good-
name. To aim then at a certain degree of fame,
so far from being unlawful is commendable. Nor
is it less commendable by honest industry to aspire
to riches in a moderate manner: For riches as they
are a means to enable us to practice many virtues,
are in themselves an innocent desirable good. Still
is it very dangerous both to our temporal and eter-
nal happiness, to give entrance in our hearts to any
the least attachment to these or any other as inno-
cent pleasures of the earth. Nay every attachment
to them is absolutely inconsistent with that tempo-
ral peace in which alone consists the little earthly
happiness we may aspire-to: In-as-much as, by the
fall of man, not only man's nature, but even every
other being with regard to him is changed; God
having inseparably annex'd to every pleasure a por-
tion of care and pain and difficulty, as well in it's
possession as in it's pursuit: And this he has done

in punishment of the ill use which man made of those earthly pleasures at a time when he might have tasted them pure and unalloy'd. So that now not even the innocent necessary solace of eating for the support of life is to be purchased but at the price of painful industry. *In the sweat of thy brow, says GOD to every-one of us in the person of ADAM, Shal't thou eat thy bread.**

What pleasure so innocent can we form to ourselves, which must not cost us the price of our tranquillity to pursue and possess? To obtain this post, that charge, tho' ever so due to our merit, what toils, what submissions must not we go through! What anxieties? What industry? What study? What attendance? To keep it, what unwearied diligence is not necessary? What application! What circumspection! What labour, time, and pain, and patience! And O the doubts, the fears, the apprehensions, at every possibility of losing it! Besides the jealousies and grudges and disgusts and calumnies and plots and treacheries and wily circumventions of the envious, which must be patiently endured and prudently dissembled to possess it with any safety to interest, honour, life or conscience. Is it a guiltless pleasure to possess in wedlock this amiable person? O the thick sprigs of pointed thorns which must be gather'd with this specious rose! O the diversity of tempers! O the too soon discover'd imperfections in each-other! O the wane of a first violence of passion! O the jealousies attending an excess of love! O the doubts, the fears, the animosities, on one side and the other, caused by Jealousy! O the pangs of child-bearing! O the cares in the education of a numerous offspring! O the agonies when they prove untoward! O the anguish when the tractable are sick or unfortunate! O the living deaths when they must be resign'd to death! O the rack of disagreement with an odious partner! O the heart-rending griefs at separating from a loved and loving consort! O poverty! O sickness! O death! O the innumerable untold thorns with which the pleasures of the marriage state are generally beset! And is the gaudy flower of human praise, however justly given more easy to enjoy with unalloy'd delight? No, Christians, no. That, like the fragrant graceful Eglantine, has it's briars too; and those acute ones. One just encomium shall raise a thousand obloquies, ten thousand lies. Praise, if unjust, unmasks you to your friends; and, if well-grounded, exposes you to all the malice of your enemies, whom it excites with envy. To study how to merit men's esteem is wise: To study how to get it is rank folly. Since nothing is more capable of rendering us obnoxious to private hatred than public esteem. And vain is it to think that public esteem will over-balance pri-

* *Genesis* iii.

vate enmity. No, no: DAVID is an instance of the contrary.

Fraught with victory and laden with glory, the magnanimous youth was returning triumphant from the defeat of the gigantic *Philistin*, when the people, to reward his bravery with the marks of their esteem, came forth to receive him with loud acclamations of joy: For *he was accepted in the eyes of all the people... Moreover....* To leave him no room to doubt of the public esteem he was in, *The very women who came forth from all the tribes of Israel, singing and dancing to SAUL the king, in timbrels of joy and in cornets, sung, playing and saying SAUL HAS SMOTE A THOUSAND AND DAVID TEN-THOUSAND.** O the noble encomium! O the exalted panegyric in brief! O the flattering proof of merited esteem! How elated, how pleased, how transported would not you be, O Christians; could you but attain to the like honours? *David* however had no cause to be so. For O the jealousies! O the malice, the hatred, the rage which they excited in the breast of *Saul* against him, and which nothing less would satiate than the stripling's blood. It would really move compassion and indignation in a savage, to see the young warrior just return'd from rescuing his native country out of the jaws of ruin and infamy, instead of receiving the due premium of his valour, persecuted to death with open violence and secret treachery; and, exile in his native land, obliged to flee from place to place, from town to town, from wilderness to wilderness; compell'd to seek his safety in wandering among strangers, in beggary, in playing the madman: And all this for what? Merely for having merited public esteem and received an uncourted mark of it in noisy unavailing praises from a few women. Go then, Christians: And if you deserve more than *David*; if you are safer from envy and enmity than *David*; even pursue the vain esteem the empty praises you may perhaps obtain. But if otherwise; have a care you do not dearly pay the acquisition at the big price of peace, of rest, of ease and health and every desirable happiness in life, if not of life itself.

Riches, as I have already hinted, if we consider nothing in them but the opportunities they afford us of doing good, are a desirable pleasure; but then, if we consider also the many cares and pains and confinements and anxieties which must be endured to acquire that pleasure even in a lawful way, contented mendicity is a happier state. But why do I say, *happier*, than where there is no happiness at all? Alas, Who would wish to be happy, if happiness consists in being the butt of envy, the mark of thieves, the sport of fortune, the dupe of knavery; besieged by flatterers, surrounded by leeches, im-

* *1 Kings* xviii.

son'd

son'd by formality; daily liable to be bereft of substance, reputation and life, by sycophants, by traitors, by lawyers, by robbers; by perjury, by tyranny, by false plots, by real conflagrations, storms, revolutions, murders, and infinit other dangers which attend the rich, and of which the beggar never feels a fear? Go persuade a rich man to be as much in peace as, much at rest, amidst these numerous perils, as the poor man wrapt-up in ragged safety. But there is no language which can have the power of persuasion against experience. Too sensibly are the rich affected with their not ill-grounded fears, to have any sense of the blessing of inward peace: And without inward peace what happiness can there be. O Christians then, dear-loved Christians! What happiness can you propose to yourselves in the pursuit or possession of earthly power, sensual delight, vain praise or sordid riches or any other if there be any other pleasure of this earth; when all or any of them evidently cost you the price of peace and safety the only valuable blessings in this life?

But I remember to have heard of a certain physician, who, for the sake of the antidotes, had so long and so frequently swallow'd poisons of all sorts, till at length they grew so familiar to him that nothing but the strongest poisons would nourish him: And this I take, Christians, to be pretty much your case. So long and so repeatedly have you endured nay hunted after those lurking miseries which empoison every enjoyment of this life, that many of you can find nothing in them of bitter, nothing destructive, nothing but what custom has so season'd to your depraved appetites as to take from them every appearance of evil. I would leave you therefore to enjoy the miseries, which, under the gilded leaf of nominal pleasure, you swallow so eagerly and feed upon so leisurely; if all the mischief ended here. If there was nothing worse in the pleasures of this world than there was in *Jonathan's* honey, a simple taste of which was big with temporal death; I could bear, with some degree of patience, that men, that Christians, run so precipitately in search of them. In a word, if earthly pleasures were obstructive to our happiness only in this life; I would stifle my concern at the general infatuation of mankind for present enjoyment; I would see them hug misery in the embraces of a pleasing shadow and would say nothing. But who can forbear speaking, who does but consider how very much the phantom pleasures of this life are apt to wean the heart of man from every desire, nay from every remembrance of heaven. A lively instance we have of this in the present gospel.

Our Saviour to give his disciples encouragement to trample on all the false joys of this earth and aspire to the sublimer more substantial joys of an eternal kingdom, takes them up to the summit of

Tabor; and, transfiguring himself on the mount, gives them a feeble foretaste of the glory which shall be reveal'd in them when they quit this miserable vale of tears; regales them, in a word, with a passing relish of heaven in the extatic joy transfused through every sense to their very souls, by this heavenly vision. Ah! who would not have expected to hear the disciples, amidst their holy transports of sensitive pleasure, cry out with eagerness after the purer more defined delights of paradise? Who would not have expected to hear them say: "O my lovely JESUS! If such be the sweets of thy participated mysteries in this life; O! What must not be the untold unconceived and inconceivable excess of bliss ineffable flowing from the full communication of thy boundless glory in the next! O when, when shall this faith be lost in evidence? All the days, I am now at war, I am waiting with impatience for my change. * O that it would come! O! If such be the emanations of my GOD; what (ah what!) must GOD himself be, to behold? O how my soul thirsts after the living and strong GOD! Ah! When shall I come and appear before the face of my Lord? † When shall this limited joy be lost in a sea of boundless bliss, with thee, in Heaven?" Who, I say, would have wonder'd to see their spiritual joy embitter'd by an insupportable anxiety to quit it for pleasures more permanent? But Not at all. The present enjoyment is all they attend to. "But it is earthly: It is sensitive: It cannot be permanent without obstructing the future enjoyment of infinitely greater pleasure for eternity." No matter. It is present enjoyment, and that is enough to engross all their affections, and to make them forgetful of every other." Lord! It is good for us to be here. Lord, as long as we are well, as long as we are so happy, so full of spiritual joy in thy company here, what need is there for changing our situation; It is good for us to be here; let us then continue well while we are so. As long as we are with thee, as long as thou art with us, as long as we can remain on this earth and be thus at rest, it is good for us to be here what need have we to look any farther? If Thou can'st put up upon this earth, we shall readily consent to it. And if Thou wilt resolve to remain here; let us build here three tabernacles, one for thee, one for Moses and one for Elias." Ah feeble frail unthinking disciples! How evident to every thinking person is it not that present enjoyment however innocent has lost you to yourselves? How truly had the evangelical cause to say that St. Peter, the speaker for all, knew not what he said. Ah! he forgot, or rather he never yet consider'd, how infinitely the joys of Heaven

* 106. xiv.

† Psalm xli.

surpass the utmost joys of the Earth. O *Peter*! Did'st thou but know what thou say'st; how little would'st thou wish to have thy petition granted! This joy, this glory, this ecstasy of both, which so ravishes thy feeble sense, is but a faint imperfect taste of that bliss thou art call'd to, and it must be renounced to attain to that. It will be necessary for Christ himself to exchange this private glory for public infamy, this delight for exquisite pain, this mount for another, this *Tabor* for a *Calvary*; in a word, it will *behave Christ himself to suffer, and so enter into his glory*: And can you his disciples ever hope to follow him thither by any smoother path? *It is by many tribulations we must enter into the Kingdom of God*, and not by many pleasures. The Kingdom of Heaven suffers violence and none but the violent bear it away. Ah! had *Peter* known and thought as much; would he, think you, have given up his heart to such a confined enjoyment? No, Christians, no: But present pleasure decoy'd him, wean'd him from the thought of the future, the degeneracy of his heart, yet unrenew'd, perverted the purpose of the spiritual favour; and the best excuse for his unprovident request is, that which the Evangelist makes for him, that *he knew not what he said*. But if the conduct of St. *Peter* was improvident on his side; it was not so on the Almighty's part. No: Graciously wise was it in Thee, my God, to suffer this minister of thy instructive truths to err in this particular. Yes, Christians, doubtless the Divine Wisdom permitted the Apostle thus to err in his judgment, the more effectually to set our judgment right, by practically convincing us how dangerous is every earthly pleasure, though ever so innocent ever so spiritual in itself; how liable it is to illusion, and how apt, in concert with our self-love, to lead us into an apathy for Heaven and eternity: And therefore how cautious we ought to be giving it admittance into our hearts.

II. All pleasures then in this life are temptations and very dangerous ones too? Yes, Christians, they are: But it is our self-love which makes them so. Temporal pleasures of every sort are in themselves but mere external temptations, which though they keep intelligence with our depraved appetites, have nevertheless no power in our hearts till we allow them entrance there, by giving our sensual faculties the upper hand of reason and God's Grace. While then we keep them out of our hearts, they may besiege us, but they cannot hurt us. In short, while we are watchful to keep our souls from all attachment to them; tempt us they may but cannot overcome us either in our pursuit, or in the possession, of them. Nay if, by faithful adhesion to God, we follow closely the Apostle's rule of *having nothing in affection while possessing all things*

in fact; amid'st all the pomps of power we shall have all the innocence of the lowliest subjection; the lawful delights of the sense will be dignified with purity; human praise will become matter of self-humiliation to us; and in the midst of all the exuberances of riches and plenty, we shall be blessed in the holy poverty of our spirit and have a right to the rewards of voluntary indigence. And thus may we render meritorious those very earthly pleasures which attachment might render criminal, and which our indolence always renders at least dangerous temptations.

To make this wise use then of temporal enjoyment what have we to do but to keep a strict watch over our senses in order to prevent their betraying us into any familiarity with present pleasures. For the whole art of conquest depends upon our vigilance. If we admit these traitors to parley with our sensuality; we shall be decoy'd into confidence in them: And once we trust to their flattering approaches: we shall surrender our hearts to their discretion, and become the dupes of our credulity. Whereas, if, mistrusting their fair approaches, we keep them at a distance; check the sympathy of our appetites for them; and absolutely force our faculties to renounce all internal intercourse with them; our hearts will be safe; they will never gain admittance with us, and all the efforts they can make to tempt our fortitude will only serve to augment our merit in despising them, our facility in resisting them, and our glory and triumph in a complete victory over them.

You will think, perhaps, some of you, Christians, to excuse yourselves from a practice of this importance by pleading an impossibility of totally renouncing every inward attachment to pleasures of the earth, while you are conversant in it. But, with your leave, let me ask you: What one step have you ever yet taken towards it, to be at any certainty, whether it be possible or not? I ask you not: Whether to resist the temptations of temporal enjoyment, you ever exposed yourselves, after the example of Christ, to the solitary horrors of a mountainous wilderness, rather than be advanced to power? Whether, like St. *Bernard*, you ever leap'd into a freezing lake, rather than yield to the insinuating alleatives of carnal delight? Whether you ever attempted, with a St. *Alexis*, to live in the disguise of a beggar in your parent's palace, rather than hazard an attachment to your parent's riches? Or whether you ever so much as wish'd, like a St. *Paul* or a St. *Anthony*, to entrench yourselves, against the dangerous praise or esteem of men, amidst the lonely austerities of an inaccessible desert? These are heroic enterprises which are not to be expected but from an eminent sanctity. But, methinks, I should be glad to know, when assaulted by any suggestion of pleasure, when hurried unawares to the brink

brink of a precipice, when pendent half-over and ready to hurl headlong into the jaws of sin, how you then behaved. What violence did you use to yourselves to draw back? Have you on such occasions, immediately had recourse to God, in fervent sincere and serious prayer, to procure his divine assistance? Have you ever applied to the holy exercise of fasts? Have you ever girt yourselves with a hair-cloth, to preserve, at the expence of bodily ease, the innocence and grace of God in your souls? Have you ever given up the favourite temptation, the darling pleasure, rather than lose Heaven, your soul and your God? Have you ever, in a word, crush'd the traitor in the grass, by resisting, repelling a suggestion in it's first beginnings, or even breaking-off in time a dangerous correspondence? Rather on the contrary have not your souls, through every sense, invited, courted, dragged temptation from abroad into the inmost recesses of your hearts, by constant frequentation of balls, plays and operas, and dissipating *rendez-vous*, by dangerous pursuits abroad and idleness or mispent hours at home, by trifling with peril and loudly knocking at the very gates of ruin? What wonder can it be then, that, doing thus, you should conceive it quite impossible to conquer, or even so much as to resist, the insinuating treachery of earthly pleasures? Doing thus, I frankly own myself, that it is quite impossible to shut your hearts and bar-out every attachment to a flattering world. But would you reverse your conduct, and forestall the temptation by keeping it at a distance; O how possible, how practicable you would find it! "But there is the point, *you cry*; How CAN I?" Ah! glorious apostle thou, thanks to thy faith and fortitude has't furnish'd me wherewith to answer these feeble-hearted Christians. How CAN I? *I can all things in him who comforts me.* O heartless Christians! would you but, with St. Paul, fix a firm faith in the graces of your Saviour and frequently recurring to the fountains of his precious blood draw thence your fortitude and consolation; soon, soon would you find, that you, as well as He was, are able to do *all things in him*: You would find in that *all things* the incentives of the flesh, subdued, the raging heats of youthful blood allay'd, and the rash furious fervor of green unsettled years suppress'd and humbled: You would find the excitements of companions check'd by reminders of conscience; the pressures of Satan repell'd by the love of a crucified Christ; and the slippery paths of sinful occasions (which are not sought) made possible to pass over, by the fear of God.

But what am I talking of? The bare idea of an apostle lifted by grace to the third Heaven, makes you lose sight of the hopes of imitating him. Well then, beloved, let us confine ourselves to a more

humble sphere. You all know, I presume, the case of poor innocent *Joseph* when sent a slave into *Egypt*. Nor need I acquaint you with the tenderness of his age, the gracefulness of his person, the sprightliness of his mind, the gentleness of his temper, nor the nobility of his blood; nor yet with the many attractives which render'd him truly amiable: Already I imagin you are sufficiently inform'd of them. But I very much question whether or not, you have ever sufficiently weigh'd the perilous assault he had to sustain from the wife of his master: He a poor and powerless stranger, his mistress rich and powerful: He without art or experience, his lady all guile and contrivance; the attacks frequent, the occasions unavoidable, the attractives excessive, the facility of possession uncommon, the consent in no danger of punishment, but the refusal big with irremediable misery. Ah! What, I wonder, what would one of our perfumed spruce delicate powder'd Christians of this age say to himself in such a situation? Yet I guess. "How CAN I, *he would cry*? How can I resist this temptation to sensual delight, thus distant from my native home, and stript of every other earthly pleasure? If I lose this good fortune; what must be my portion? A *Yes* puts me in immediate possession of wealth and liberty: A *No* plunges me into the extreme of distress amidst the horrors of a dungeon. To reject such gracious advances from an absolute mistress to her slave, would it not be the grossest ill-breeding? To provoke the indignation of a passionately amorous woman, would not it be rank folly and madness? Careless, intreated, solicited; in a word, besieged by beneficent flattering beauty from without, and betray'd by vehemence of fears and frailty within, how is it possible to keep one's ground? How CAN I?" Thus, *I fear*, thus would the major part of our sex reason in such a situation. And ah! How many of the chaster, modest, more virtuous sex are fatally betray'd into their ruin by such a fallacious kind of reasoning. "How CAN I, *says this servant maiden to herself*? How can I return with indignation the engaging advances of this generous Master? Service is no inheritance: Confin'd and hardly treated by a rigorous mistress, flatter'd and courted by an indulgent Master, poor and but little fitted for toil, *How can I* resist the occasion fortune offers to rescue me at once from want and labour? If I consent, ease wealth and pleasure wait on me: If I refuse, distress and servitude attend me to my grave. *How can I* then stand firm? Poor mistaken dupes of irreflexion! How illy you misunderstand the genuine sense of those few words! Ah how do you abase the dignity the power of that noble soul franchised and fortified with the all-powerful grace of God! *Joseph* was as poor as the poorest of you all; as delicate,

as noble, as honour'd, as unfit for labour as any of you all; as severely tempted as the worst of you; more generous, more honourable, more full of the fear of God than most of you. He too had his argument, *How can I*. But ah! How differently does he turn it. How CAN I, he cries, *how can I commit this evil and sin against my Lord?* * This is indeed applying words to their own natural meaning: This is discoursing truly like a rational creature: "As if he had said, how can I presume to offend my God with sin, to offend my neighbour by planting infamy or discord or both in an honourable family, to offend myself by throwing a stain upon my conscience. How CAN I?" O feeble tempted Christians! Thus, thus is it that you should turn those dubious words *How can I*; when ever you are assail'd by tempting pleasures. "Alas how can I do this evil, and sin against my master or my mistress! *How can I*, dare to betray the trust reposed in my virtue? *How can I* venture to insult my God with an open violation of his laws, open to him, if hidden to the world? *How can I* think of injuring my neighbour in so gross a manner, in a point so tender; which, if discover'd, sows in the family endless discord, shame and distraction: and, if conceal'd, will alienate their hearts and like a cankerworm corrode and gnaw insensibly their mutual peace? *How can I* be so barbarous to myself as to commit this evil: Which, if detected, as it most probably will be soon or late, will load me with everlasting shame and misery: And if it should by chance remain a secret; it still must expose me to the contempt even of my tempter, destroy my peace with insupportable remorses of my conscience, and, what is worse, render me odious to my God? What then, ah! what comparison can there be between the poverty, the labour, the confinement and hard usage I thus apprehend, tho' I should endure it to the end of life, and the shame, the punishment, the guilt, the temporal infamy and eternal misery, which one consent to this insinuating pleasure threatens me withal? *How can I then do this evil? How can I?*"

I will not however, Beloved, dispute with you, what I cannot doubt of, that resistance is very difficult in such and many other cases: Nor would I in the least wish to conceal the sweats (almost of blood) which it must cost us, when closely prest by pleasure, to come off with victory. St. John Chrysostom was certainly in the right when he admired the flight of Joseph as a miracle superior to that of the Three Children's escape out of the furnace at Babylon. But what are all the difficulties we have to surmount, in comparison with the immensity of glory and bliss which we may acquire by faithfully

* Genesis xxxix.

resisting the temptations of earthly pleasure. And with what courage ought we not to combat them when we consider, that the victory depends upon your own will, and that we have a God ever ready to combat with and for us: *A faithful God who will not suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength*. "Can we then, you'll say, escape these extreme occasions which our involuntary situation throws us into? Can we touch the pitch of vicious example and not be defiled by it?" Are we Christians, *I ask?* Do we believe that God permits them? Do we believe his truth, that *he will not suffer us to be tempted beyond our strength?* You will answer me, *Yes*. Then I say we must allow, that we can resist them. "What then! Can we poor servants, children, dependents, obliged by necessity to live amidst every scene of licentiousness; we great personages amidst an inevitable life of dissipation, amidst intemperate entertainments where more consciences are destroy'd than healths are toasted, amidst the snares of so many secret wolves, amidst the indecencies of so many open libertines, can we preserve our innocence inviolate, or even unstain'd? Can we? Doubtless we can if we have but the resolution and grace to will. "But poverty crushes me within doors, and there is a great personage who will enter by a golden key: Can I hinder his entrance? Can I shut-out relief in extreme necessity?" Yes: With a little confidence in that God, who *suffers us not to be tempted beyond our strength*, I can. "But the person who lays siege to my honour is so powerful, so resolute, so desperate, that if I open but my mouth to refuse; it may be shut-up forever. Can I then cry-out, with a knife at my throat?" Yes: *I say again*. If I do not prefer a few uncertain days of unreputable life to an eternity of glory; I CAN. In a word, I am able; nay more than able, I am almighty in God: For *I can all things in him who comforts me*; unless under a counterfeit I cannot I conceal *I will not*. But ah! There will come a day of restitution when all things must be restored to their true names, when many an *I cannot* will be unmask'd, and the lapses which now are honourably call'd imbecillities and human frailties, will be treated by the Almighty as shameful indecencies and absolute perversities.

Flatter not yourselves then, Christians, that the difficulty of resisting the pleasures of the earth will excuse your surrendering your hearts to their discretion. Your temptations cannot be more vigorous than those of Joseph. It was not the Skirmish of a few hours, not a flying combat which he sustain'd. No, no: says Holy Writ: *From day to day both the woman was importune to the youth, and he refused the adultery*. Rather than he would offend his God, injure his neighbour, or sully his purity with forbidden pleasure, he chose to hazard imprisonment;

ment, tortures and even death: And shall you unthreaten'd, uncourted, run head-long yourselves to the courtship of every lawless delight? If he could renounce the proffer'd advantages of this life rather than hazard the eternal advantages of the next; shall Christians not be able to do as much? Shall a *Hebrew* be able to do more than a Christian can? Nay shall infidels actually have done more? Shall one Roman general trample on power, riches, and vain esteem by returning from victory to the plough, and another, with captive beauty at his mercy and sensual delight in his power to command, nobly refuse the flattering temptation entrance in his heart; and Christians give it admittance? What have you to say of soldiers confronting all the terrors of fire and steel to repel hunger? Of miserable mariners boldly braving all the horrors of sea and elements to flee from poverty? Did you ever act so vigorously, hazard equally, nay hazard any thing to flee temptation to conquer the attachment you have to earthly pleasures? Do you not rather run to meet them? Do you not hug and cherish every joy, every pleasure, every delight, which the flattering world once offers to your senses? And do you not yield yourselves such abject slaves to it as inwardly to cry, like the apostles, on mount *Tabor*: *It is good for us to be here?*

Not but there is a very great difference between the apostles case and yours. Their eagerness in present delight was innocent, tho' it might have been dangerous, and was the effect of reflection's absence. Your eagerness for future, your attachment to present enjoyment, is not only always dangerous, but generally sinful, because mostly the effect of deliberation. They were transported with their present delight because Christ was with them, and it was, to be with him, that they wanted to continue there. Your delight is in pleasures which lead you wide of Christ; and you will persist in the pursuit of them, at the manifest risk of losing him forever. O Christians! What are you about? Ah be once yourselves: Look round this flattering world and examin the merit of every pleasure it has to give; and if you find one single one, which has solidity or certainty: Nay I say more, if you find one which is not extremely dangerous to pursue, and bitter to possess, I will myself recommend it to you. But if you cannot find one earthly enjoyment but what must cost you your peace, your ease, your reputation, your life or health, or all; even take my advice: Never give them admittance to your hearts; keep them at a distance, resist them from their beginning and renounce, from their first approaches, every internal intercourse with them. Thus will you secure to yourselves that felicity, which is lawful for you to wish in this life, and that eternal happiness you are created for in the

next: And which I beseech God, &c. In the Name, &c.

Second INDICATION of the PASSION.

OF all the crimes which human nature is so apt to fall into, there is no one which leaves behind it, in the heart of a criminal, so acute a sting and so lasting a repentance as the shedding of human blood. The horror which this crime indelibly stamps on the imagination of an assassin is a kind of hideous mimic of that all-wise providence which draws good out of evil. For it melts cruelty into compassion, enmity into friendship, and the most implacable hatred into the softest love. No sooner has a man hunted his real or fancied adversary to death, than his destructive vengeance subsides to make way for self-tormenting pity: And, like the coral-tree which harden'd out of it's element softens when rector'd to it's native flood, implacable as his soul was while torn from the bowels of humanity, no sooner is it dipp'd in fraternal blood than it mollifies him into sympathetic distress: The object of his guilt becomes the subject of his repentance, and forcibly compels him with unfeigned remorse to bewail the deceased, in the character of an injured friend, whom, while living, he pursued in the mistaken shape of an injurious enemy. An instance of this was the emperor *Bassian*, who, as history informs us, after killing his brother *Geta*, was stung with so deathless a remorse, that to his grave he could never more hear his name utter'd or behold his resemblance, tho' but in a picture, without breaking forth into a flood of disconsolate tears.

Ah Christians, Christians! If the murder of a brother, of a neighbour, a mere man, a sinful man, a very enemy, can soften into pity, grief and inconsoleable repentance, the hearts of the most harden'd butchers; how comes it, that the eyes of the most tender Christians cannot find a tear to mourn the assassination of their injured brother, father, friend and God and Saviour? That Sacred JESUS, at whose awful name you bow your heads, and bow, I hope, your hearts, appear'd on earth to act in all these characters, in man's behalf. And he who *thought it no robbery to be himself equal to God, lower'd himself for love of man, taking upon him the form of a servant, made to the likeness of man, and in a habit found as man.* • And what requital did man make him for all this excess of bounty? Why—his requital was a painful, cruelly painful, multiplied, ignominious, lingering death, terminated on a shameful cross? And of the almost infinit number of men who combined in the ungrateful deicide, where is the man who relents or bewails him? How often, beloved, do you, even

• *Philipp. ii.*

you,

you, hear his sacred name pronounced! And which of you ever pays to it the tribute of a tear? How frequently do you behold the sacred semblance of your injured Jesus in a crucifix! And which of you ever bathed it with compunctive moisture? Ah! Go and learn of savages the art of melting into tears. 'Twas not the canvas or the colours *Bassian* wept for, but the inhuman fratricide, which those, work'd up into the likeness of his brother, put him in mind of. A crucifix is but a crucifix, make the most of it: And ivory and wood are still but ivory and wood; and barely view'd as such deserve our spittle rather than our tears. But ah! who can behold them thrown into the sad disfigured form of an assassinated Saviour, without remembering the outrageous injuries he endured for and from ourselves? Who can remember these, and yet forbear to weep.

Surely then, Christians, you are under some extreme mistake, and comfort yourselves with thinking, you had no hand in this unnatural murder. But ah! To our misfortune, you and I are parties as much concern'd as any in the cruential fratricide. For our crimes did Jesus die: Each, each of us was present in his mind and present in the cause: And had there been no other crimes, to die for those would have kill'd him. We then, among the rest, pronounced the fatal sentence: These guilty hands of ours subscribed the deadly warrant, and even executed it: And God may justly say to every one of us, as once to *Cain*, *"the voice of thy brother's blood cries to me from the earth."* Whence then, whence is it that every cheek is dry, where every heart should weep with tears of blood? Had Christ been less than man; had He, at best, but been a stranger, nay an enemy, so far from God

Genesis iv.

S E R M O N

On the THIRD SUNDAY in LENT.

St. LUKE xi. 14.

JESUS was casting out a devil, and it was dumb. And when he had cast out the devil, the dumb man spoke, and the crowds were astonish'd.

IT is a part, beloved faithful, and not the least part of the devil's artifice, once he possesses a soul by sin, to render it spiritually dumb; that, by

and friend and brother to us; the cruelties he suffer'd had been enough to draw a sea of tears from Christian eyes. But ah! the misfortune is, that Christians seldom reflect upon his sufferings. You either never read his passion in the gospel, or if you read it, 'tis not with the seriousness you read a novel with: but with the dissipation of a news-paper, you read it over only to forget it. Fain would I therefore fix it in your minds by giving you a just idea of it. But that, alas, is quite impossible. No words can utter and no tongue can tell the agonies which Jesus, guiltless Jesus, felt for you and me. All I can do is, by the help of words, to shew you, how inexpressible his sufferings were; that you may gather thence, how endless your condolence and contrition ought to be. This I shall do on next *Good-Friday*, in an imperfect recital of the Passion: And hope to see a crouded audience and see it bathed in tears. But I shall fright you if I talk of crouds. Jesus may be haled and trampled on by crouds of rabble: But you, alas, are too tender to bear a little crouding, for his sake. Leave then these walls the proxies of your grief: These walls, like rocks, shall, shall rend in-twain with grief, while you, less yielding than the rocks, sit snug and unconcern'd, at home. Or, if you chuse to come and triumph over Jesus's sufferings with dry eyes; even shut the doors, nay barricade them; lest some relenting heart should enter to interrupt your quiet. The poor especially be sure to keep out: For they are his friends and fellow-sufferers in this life, and may even force a tear from you by their example. But where am I? Not among cannibals but Christians, and zealous Christians: Whom I hope to see, that day, transform'd from crouds of criminals to crouds of saints.

robbling it of the means of applying for a remedy, he may effectually maintain his tyrannic dominion over it. A stratagem this, which he has long practis'd upon the souls of sinners; and, alas, with too frequent and fatal success. For ah! how many unhappy criminals are there now in the Church, to this day as heretofore, who, sensibly feeling the bitter effects of *Satan's* arbitrary oppression, daily,

may every hour, every instant, groan under the unwieldy weight of an over-burden'd conscience! Yet have they not either courage or resolution to disburden themselves at the feet of that Divine Lord who so graciously invites all, *who labour and are heavy-laden*, † to accept relief and refreshment from him, in the Holy Sacrament of Penance! But whence proceeds this strange this lamentable inconsistency? Alas! It arises from a guilty want of speech. Alas! They are possess'd with a dumb-devil, who artfully ties-up their tongues from complaining of their grievances to the spiritual physician in the sacred tribunal of confession; and either suffers them not to approach to God's minister for a cure, or when they approach, curbs their resolution from laying open their evils in order for a cure. Poor unhappy creatures! Miserable dupes of their own inconsideracy! How do I not compassionate them? And who can forbear shedding tears of concern in sight of such thoughtless perversity, which is so much the more to be deplored as the muteness of the soul is inexpressibly more fatal, as well as more frequent, than that of the body? And therefore is this spiritual dumbness of more dangerous tendency than that of the sense; not only because the faculties of the soul are infinitely superior in nature and office to those of the flesh, but also because it requires an infinitely greater miracle from the hand of God to cure the former than the latter. JESUS CHRIST, we find in the gospel for this day, with the single assistance of a merciful word, dispossesses the carnally dumb-man, of the devil who lock'd up his utterance; and with the sole courteous exorcism of his all-powerful grace, restores the patient to the use of his speech. In fact, *the dumb-man speaks, and the gap in multitudes are astonish'd*. And well may they wonder: The miracle is great indeed. For if the dumb-man speaks; then he must be cured. This is a natural consequence in a carnal sense. Ah! would I could say as much in a spiritual one. But alas! there are many spiritual mutes, who are help'd to the facility of utterance; who are not therefore cured. On the reverse, tho' preventing grace sets their tongue at liberty; all the use they make of the miraculous mercy, is, to strengthen the chains with which the devil holds them in slavery. They speak, in good truth; but they are not cured of the dumb-devil who possesses them; because they do not take care to speak what they ought and as they ought. Don't imagin, Christians, that I am fishing now for matter to make you miserable, or that I want to trouble the tranquillity of your conscience by raising in them unnecessary scruples. No, no: Too dear to me is the happiness of every individual among you, too much do I wish you the

* St. Matth. xi.

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blessings of internal peace to disturb it where it is real. But after all, what confusion can be more fatal than a fallacious peace? What disorder more dangerous than a supine tranquillity in the midst of ruin? And what better is the peace of a multitude of modern Christians? For to see them every day confessing their sins, yet every day repeating them; to see the frequent confessions and applications to the Divine Eucharist attended with little other fruit than as frequent relapses; to see that every *Easter* finds those very persons greater sinners than ever, whom but a year before it seem'd to have transform'd to serious penitents; who but must suspect, that their peace is not real, that their cure is feign'd, that they are spiritual mutes in confession, or, at least, that the mutes do not speak to the purpose. But let us speak plain: For my own part, it makes me shrewdly suspect that many confessions are fruitless, many pernicious, many not only null but sacrilegious; that the devil, instead of being cast-out, has establish'd his despotic dominion in the souls of such with greater tyranny than ever; and that the major part of mankind are in this like those unhappy creatures, who drown themselves in the bath which they went into for a cure. To apply then a seasonable remedy to so desperate and general a disorder, I shall now endeavour, with the Divine assistance, to lay before you in all their horror.

I The abuses committed in the Holy Sacrament of Penance, by which the confessions of a multitude of Christians are render'd not only invalid, but oftentimes sacrilegious, and for the major part at least fruitless: *And*

II. The causes of such abuses, and the means of removing them.

" Assist me, Spirit divine! For Thou alone
" can'st do it. Assist me to cast-out of every chris-
" tian breast, this speechless devil; who, not con-
" tent to rule us with despotic tyranny, labours to
" make us tools in eternizing our own slavery.
" Give me the heavenly energy which may suffice
" to make these Christians feel the mad extrava-
" gance of working this sacramental remedy for
" sin into the poison of damnation: And since,
" dear Lord, in thy excess of mercy, thou hast
" vouchsafed to leave thy ministers the power of
" releasing us from the guilty chains of sin and sa-
" tan; O! For pity's sake permit us not to lose the
" inestimable benefit by a more guilty silence, or by
" a senseless undigested narrative of crimes, preg-
" nant with one still greater than them all."

I. What institution is there so sacred, so divine, which our corruption does not abuse? Reversed by the malice of that, every gracious design of God

is perverted into evil. God design'd that by confession we should rise out of a state of sin; and who could dream, if experience did not shew it to us broad awake, that any of us could be so outrageously perverse as to make use of it to plunge ourselves into that state deeper and deeper? And how many, alas, could confessions be made public, would there not appear, who, instead of confessing their sins, go to the confessional the better to conceal them! Their perfections the priest is sure of being inform'd of, directly or obliquely: The failings of a husband, of a wife, of a relation or an acquaintance he is sure to have forced upon him: But of their own sins, he is less certain after confession than before! Or if they do confess certain foibles which they are neither ashamed of nor sorry for; it is only to give a confessor the less mistrust of the greater crimes they are resolved to stifle. O daring perfidy! O insolent sacrilege! Is this recurring for a cure to the physician? Or is it not rather perverting his prescription into ruin? Is this appeasing God? Or not rather insulting him? Ah beloved! what then can tempt you to act thus? If you mean not to reveal the deformity of your souls: why make them more deformed by a sacrilegious hypocrisy? Why go to confession at all? Or if you go to confess your sins, why stifle any? It is not with the tribunal of Christ as with the bar of the world. At the earthly bar you have indeed oftentimes a pitiless judge, the very sternness of whose countenance is enough to instill horror into a criminal, and anticipate in him all the agonies of his execution; a jury, perhaps, which with a thousand cross-questions shall draw your very condemnation from your own mouth; witnesses to confront you; scribes to record your infamy; and a crowded audience to publish your shame: If you refuse to plead; there are tortures to compel you: If you plead innocent you are persecuted with redoubled rigour: If you plead guilty; you are at once condemn'd, loaded with fetters and haled away to jail: But to jail, *did I say?* You are dragg'd to a condemn'd cell, to a dungeon, loaded with terrors, with confusion, with irons, never to see the light of any day but that last which is to guide you to an infamous gibbet. But at the tribunal of Christ, at the tribunal of confession, you are sure to meet with nothing like this. On the reverse: O the lenity, the tenderness, the discretion you there are sure to meet with! Your supreme judge is the merciful JESUS: Your mediator is a sympathizing brother, whose native frailty calls aloud on him to feel for you and compassionate your weakness: Yourself are your sole accuser, prosecutor and witness: And you may with safety plead guilty to the most enormous crimes; since your God and judge requires you to plead guilty, merely because he wants you to live, and not basely to live but to

reign, and to reign eternally. Why then stifle any sin at so merciful a bar? Why not lay open with sincerity all disorders in your souls, that they may be removed? Why envenom the source which is pregnant with life? Or why fill your mouths with poison, to drink from that salutary source the draught of death? Are you ashamed of laying open your disease to your divine physician? Do you blush to reveal your infirmities to his minister as infirm, by nature as yourselves: Ah what an illusion of Satan! Ah what madness of yours to second his project rather than the design of God! His design was that shame should serve you as a bridle to sin: Why will you make it the spur to guilt? Why will you let the monster persuade you to blush at confession, who dissuades you from it every where else? Ah! Believe me for once: The blushes he then suggests to you, are the retaliations of a traitor. We read to this purpose a vision of one of the fathers of the desert. Once on a time amidst the fervor of an intense contemplation, his prayer is interrupted with a spiritual vision; and in it he perceives in spirit the devil very busy about a confessional throng'd with penitents. Shock'd at the horrid sight, yet re-invigorated by innocence, the holy hermit intrepidly questions the fiend, *what he was doing there?* "Doing, *says the Devil?* 'I am making 'restitution.'" Strange paradox! Satan making restitution! The author of all fraud become a minister of justice? "Yes, *replies the rebel,* I am making restitution. I am restoring to penitents 'what I took from them before they were such. 'I robb'd them of shame, while they were sinning; that they might accumulate sin upon sin: 'And now they have sinn'd I restore them back 'their blushes; that they may want courage to 'rid themselves of those sins by confession.'" It is even so, Christians? Whatever authority the fact may be built on the moral is solid. This is a frequent artifice of our common enemy. Many are the Christians, I fear, whom Satan himself sends to the confessional, and even permits unmolested to accuse themselves of many sins; only that he may draw them unawares, by concealing some favourite vice, to commit another still greater, and thereby destroy the whole validity as well as benefit of the sacrament. For grace is indivisible, and he who sins against one part of this great law is made guilty of all.

Thus does this enemy to our happiness, in order to secure his dominion over us, invert the very natural order of things, which God's ineffable wisdom disposed with the design to bring us to the possession of himself. This is an observation as old as St. John Chrysostom's memory who taught it us. "God *says the Saint,* requires shame to be attach'd to 'sin

“sin and confidence to confession: But the devil
 “inverts this blessed disposition of Divine Provi-
 “dence and endeavours to annex confidence to sin
 “and shame to confession.” While we are in a state of
 justification, what does not the infernal traitor do;
 what does he not try, to separate us from guar-
 dian grace? Before the will he throws every al-
 lurement which may entice it to sin; and the more
 easily to compass his wicked purpose robs Virtue,
 or aims at least at robbing it, of it’s most faithful
 handmaid, modest shame: Well knowing that,
 where Modesty is not by to lend an upholding
 arm, Virtue and Grace soon sicken and give sin way
 to advance. Therefore does the fiend, while we
 are at parley with sin, paint it in the most pleasing
 colours possible, as something exceedingly delight-
 ful in the pursuit, inestimable in it’s possession, and
 attended with no evil consequences, or such as, the
 worst come to the worst, may be easily repair’d.
 “Pooh! It is but a trifling crime after all: And
 “we are Young: We may then have time to re-
 “pent of it, we may hereafter confess it, leave it
 “off, and even atone for it to Almighty God;
 “and God, who knows the frailty of our nature
 “is merciful and will readily pardon us for asking
 “him to do it.” Thus labours the perfidious fiend
 to rob us of shame while he is tempting us to sin.
 But---have we stretcht-out our hands to the gilded
 bait? Like some delusive imagery, the effect of mag-
 ic spells, it in an instant changes shape and colour:
 And when we think of confessing it; it swells to
 such a hideous figure and enormous bulk, that we
 blush at the bare proposal of confessing it: Egredi-
 ous idiots, as we are, thus to hoard-up matter for
 an endless more intolerable confusion in the end.
 To what then shall I compare such senseless con-
 duct, better than to the folly of an unguarded wo-
 man, who, heedless of her virgin honour, too
 lightly parts with it; and then as foolishly stifles
 her disgrace from the very friend who might con-
 ceal it; and stifles it till the pangs of labour render
 her infamy universal and deathless. Ah! too truly,
 too frequently are the words of the Prophet veri-
 fied in the persons of modern Christians. *The ini-
 quity of Ephraim is bound-up, and his sin is con-
 ceal’d: But the pains of a woman in labour shall
 come upon him at last.* * Yes, O perverse Sinners!
 Yes, O sacrilegious pretenders to penance! Be as-
 sured, whoever you are, that this will be your ir-
 remediable case, if you persist long in such crimi-
 nal silence. The pangs of Death will come upon
 you: Your sins will fly in your faces: And your
 consciences will sting you with intolerable remorse,
 No Confessor by to disburden you of them. Or
 if you have One near you; Satan will mock your
 endeavours to profit by the Priest you have so often

* Hosea xiii.

imposed upon with mock confessions, when your
 disbanded shame, once more becomes master of you,
 will rob you in turn of the benefit of the assistance
 of God’s Minister: And your disgrace, which you
 might have prevented so easily, so cheaply, will be
 reserved till the excruciating tortures of despair
 publish your infamy on a death-bed, to render it as
 endless as it will be universally exposed to the whole
 attentive world in the day of general scrutiny. Ah
 Sinners! What are you about? Do you forget the
 nice distinction of *Ecclesiastes*. *There is, says he,
 a confusion which leads to sin: And there is a con-
 fusion which leads to glory.* † Surely, if Shame be
 ever required, it is not at the ear of a Confessor,
 whither you are invited to throw-off your sins:
 No, no: That is a shame which tends only to keep
 the chains of guilt on you, to hurry you farther
 into the slavery of *Satan*: That is the dumb-devil
 who labours to keep possession of you: That, in a
 word, is *the confusion which tends to sin*: And
 therefore to infamy and eternal destruction. Surely
I say, on the contrary, if ever blushes are seasona-
 ble, it must be only when you are sinning against
 the Lord your God. Ah Christians! Yes:
 When you are tempted to fly in the face of your
 Divine Maker; Or, when you feel a reluctance to re-
 turn to him whoso graciously invites you; then, then
 indeed, and only then have you reason to blush;
 Then and only then you ought to be cover’d with
 horror and confusion. For then your shame may
 be a confusion tending to a reconciliation with your
 injured Lord, *a confusion which leads to glory.* Of
 two evils, is it not ever advisable to chuse the least?
 Surely then, O sinners, to humble yourselves at the
 sacred inviolably sacred bar of confession before one
 man must be infinitely more eligible than, for want
 of so doing, to be cover’d with public infamy before
 the whole universe in the general judgment. And once
 you have forfeited grace for sin; one of these two
 humiliations is the inevitable consequence. Chuse
 then which you think is most eligible: *If you judge
 yourselves, you shall not be judged*, as the apostle
 assures you. “But if you are too delicate, says
 “the Lord by the mouth of one of his prophets; if
 “you are too lenitive with iniquity to pass sentence
 “on your own guilt; if, in short, you wait till I
 “judge you; I will stamp your sins on your fore-
 “heads: and will expose your iniquity to all nati-
 “ons.” Say then, O beloved brethren: Why
 must this dumb-devil be cherish’d amidst us? Why
 shall we feel such repugnance at disburdening our-
 selves in confession to God’s minister, of those
 crimes which we committed with so much facility?
 Why conceal the wound which cannot be cured
 without being reveal’d?

“But who would be so base, you’ll say, as actu-

† Eccles. iv.

U 2

“ally

"ally to present themselves to the sacred tribunal
 "of confession to impose upon God's minister by
 "stifling their sins and concealing their inward
 "wounds? There are not many it is to be hoped,
 who make so familiar with sacrilege as absolutely
 to pass over their sins in silence when at confession.
 But then many there are, who matter them be-
 tween their teeth, rather than confess them; many
 who palliate them with a thousand excuses; many
 who gild them over to the eye of the confessor so
 artfully as to render it very difficult for him to dis-
 cover the bitter, the poison, their sins are full of.
 Ah! And is not this a grievous, very grievous abuse,
 nay the worst of abuses, if we credit *St. Peter Da-*
mian? "There is no evil in human nature more
 "dangerously heinous than to stand up in the de-
 "fence of vices committed, *says the Saint.*" O
 Christians, Christians! You go to the foot of
 that priest in his confessional: And for what? Is it
 not God, who, by the inward voice of his grace
 speaking to your consciences, sends you to that
 priest, as he sent the leper in *St. Matthew*: Re-
 member then what your Saviour has said to that le-
 per and to every-one of you: *Go, and shew your-*
self to the Priest. * It is yourselves you are to shew
 not your neighbour: it is your interior, not your
 figure and dress. Would it not, think you, have
 been a gross piece of stupidity in that leper; if, in-
 stead of revealing his uncleanly disease to the priest,
 he had labour'd to conceal it, and amused himself
 with telling him what a leprous condition such a re-
 lation, such a neighbour, such an acquaint-
 ance was in, and had like to have drawn
 even him into? And why then will you, O
 Christians, as too many of you do, overlook
 your own disorders to confess those of your neigh-
 bours; when yourselves are, and you ought to
 think yourselves the only guilty there? "Go then,
 "says *St. Ambrose*, and shew, every-one, yourself:
 "Go shew, not yours, but yourself; not to de-
 "nounce others, but to renounce yourself up to
 "God; that, thoroughly cleansed from the filth
 "of former actions, you may consecrate to his Di-
 "vine Majesty a victim which shall please him for
 "the future."

But I have charity enough for you, beloved au-
 ditors, to hope that you have faithfully confessed all
 your sins, without bringing-in others as parties con-
 cern'd, to lessen the priest's attention to your guilt, at
 the expence of their characters. I will believe that
 you have been penitent enough to impeach No-
 body but yourselves: And that you have acknow-
 ledged your crimes with a great deal of sincerity.
 But then shall I do you any injury in suspecting
 that you overlook many necessary details relating to
 the circumstances of those crimes? What if you

* *St. Matt. viii.*

are, perhaps, a churchman or statesman? Will it,
 think you, be sufficient to accuse yourself as a man
 of your private offences? No, no: There are the
 neglects of your public duty: There are your
 breaches of public trust: There are the sanctions,
 the encouragements you have given to public vice
 by your ill-example or indolence: All which must
 be confess'd. Or it may be, that you are, father, mother,
 guardian, governor or superior: Your private faults
 then are but one half of your confession; and that,
 perhaps, the least half. There are the sins of the
 head: Those children uninstructed; those servants
 ill-treated; those inferiors oppress'd, or encouraged
 in vice, or not provok'd to virtue; those orphans,
 those subjects, that society defrauded, insulted, tyrannized-over;
 the honour, the interests, the harmony, the happiness (general and particular) of that
 body civil or religious, entrusted to your govern-
 ment, and nevertheless neglected, injured, given-up,
 betray'd by your self-love, ambition, avarice, or re-
 venge, or scandalous behaviour: All, all these, as
 well as your private sins, and more than they, are
 necessary matter of confession. Are you prelates,
 judges, little sovereigns in your own estates? What
 are the crimes of the man in their consequences to
 the crimes of the prelate, of the judge, of the
 prince? Ah! Little will your confession avail, if to
 the sins of your private part of life you neglect to
 add those of the prelate who has ecclesiastics to ani-
 mate with zeal; of the judge who has justice to
 administer; of the prince who has the injured to
 right, the oppress'd to protect, the worthy to reward,
 the wicked to punish. That famous emperor
Charles the fifth being one on a time on a jour-
 ney, unaccompanied with his ordinary confessor,
 presented himself at the feet of the first he met with
 in a town he pass'd through on his way: And,
 happily for him, this worthy ecclesiastic was one of
 those faithful dispensers who have no more respect
 for crimes under the mantle of royalty, than under
 the rags of mendicity. The emperor having finish'd
 his confession, it was a charm to hear the holy con-
 fessor, without losing the respect due to his sovereign,
 thus assume with intrepidity the authority of the
 director over his penitent. "O *CHARLES*, be cries,
 "every where else emperor, here a criminal! O
 "*Charles*, every where else my sovereign, here
 "my pupil, my child! Thy confession is not yet
 "half made. Hitherto thou has't confess'd the sins
 "of *Charles*: But what are the sins of *Cesar*?
 "How are your provinces govern'd? How are
 "your treasuries managed? Are your revenues rais-
 "ed, with equity or oppression? How is your
 "court regulated? Are your nobles orderly or li-
 "centious? Is justice publicly administer'd with in-
 "tegrity or partiality? Are public grievances re-
 "dress'd? Are public ministers true to public trust,
 and

Thus obtain the reward he has in store for his elect.

"and compell'd so to be? Are your armies well disciplin'd in the art of storming heaven as well as a town? Is merit rewarded? Is guilt chastised? Is war never waged unjustly at the immense profusion of innocent blood? Are foreign dominions never invaded more upon pretext than just title? More out of ambition than reason? More from arrogance or revenge than from necessity? Are your own sufficiently defended, improved and edified? Is piety promoted by your example and zeal? And is vice and scandal suppress'd by your vigilance and wisdom? These, these, O my son, are matters you have yet to clear-up, ere your confession be compleat." Charm'd, in fact, with such a noble gospel freedom, the pious prince re-enter'd with a serious recollection into his own soul, and, sifting his heart upon all this, came forth from the sacred tribunal, corrected, amended, and sensible of many faults, which till then he had never employ'd a single thought upon: And departed so satisfied as to own, to some of his confidants, that "till then he had never learnt the art of making a good confession." Ah Christians! Give me leave to speak thus to many of you. You have confess'd the sins of the man, of the woman: But where are the sins of your state, of your condition? Why render the confession of the former offences fruitless by omitting to confess the latter? You have confess'd the sins you have committed yourselves: But why pass over in silence the sins you have made or suffer'd to commit, through the abuse or neglect of your station? These sins, as well as your own, you may reveal, without exposing your neighbour, without telling the name, or pointing-out the person: Which is not to be done. Confession is not a bar of scandal: And therefore we are not to render it odious by exposing the faults of a neighbour, even to a confessor: And a confessor who knows his duty will not suffer you to do it. Nay if curiosity should tempt him to ask you the names of persons to whose sins you confess yourselves accessory you cannot without a fault gratify him. But then you may easily, without offending against charity, say: "I have by oppressions, by my counsel, by my command, by my example, by my neglect, caused others to commit this or that sin." And where you have room to say it, 'tis a necessary matter of confession. Why are you to confess the evil you have done by yourself or others, and to stifle the good you might and ought to have done, but did not do? Why not confess the doing good a month later than you could have done it? That you defer'd till to-morrow what should have been done to-day? That you put-off to afterwards what should have been done immediately?

All, all this should be confess'd: All this should be told, in order to confound the dumb-devil and put

him to flight. But ah how few Christians are there who confess themselves thus! Few, very few indeed are the penitents who thus approach to the holy sacrament of confession. And therefore small, very small, I fear, is the number of those who reap any considerable benefit from confession, who chase the dumb-devil effectually from their hearts: While many, very many rather strengthen their own chains and establish the serpent's tyranny over them, by continuing voluntarily dumb, by speaking only by halves, or remaining mute in action while they are loud in words.

This brings me to mind the mystical lamentation of the Royal penitent, where he says: *Because I kept silence, my bones are grown old, while I cried-out all the day long.* * But! how shall we reconcile this seeming paradox? If he cried-out; how could he keep silence? If he was silent; how could he at the same time cry-out? *Because I kept silence---while I cried-out?* Is there any consistency in this? Yes, Beloved, yes: It is possible: It is more than possible; for it is fact, that Christians too often, at one and the same time, cry-out and keep silence. He who cries not out as he ought, is noisily dumb. To break silence effectually, our actions must echo to our voice. The man, who lies supine in a quag and calls-out for help with his tongue, but exerts not his limbs in concert with his voice, breaks silence but by halves, is (sensibly speaking) but a dumb crier. O how many mutes in this sense may we not number among Christians! How many Christians may we not reckon dumb in the very act of crying out. Confession, on the penitent's side, is a sort of commutative, vindictive justice. On one hand, it is to restore to God that glory which sin took from him; on the other, it is to revenge the cause of God by not letting the offender go unpunished. How then, beloved, can the dumb-man be thought to cry-out to any purpose: How can the confession be compleat, where a Christian, contenting himself with fulfilling one of these two offices of the sacrament, neglects the other? And O what grievous abuses are not committed in this part of confession, call'd Satisfaction! How justly may we not now o'days liken the penitential confessions of the major part of Christians to that fruitless fig-tree which provoked the malediction of Christ? Since what are their narratives in the confessional, but so many lifeless rehearals ornamented with all the pompous foliage of repentance but barren of every fruit. Ah! this age, this generation may boast, if it can be any honour to it, of having brought the false delicacy of man's perverted nature, to it's utmost height. A usurer shall go to confession and accuse himself of having defrauded his dealers, stripp'd the widow, robb'd the orphan,

* Psalm xxxi.

oppress'd

oppress the poor, and drain'd into his coffers, the very blood and marrow of the honest labourer. And the confessor who knows his duty shall only require in satisfaction for all his crying injustice that he restore the ill-accumulated hoard: And what answer shall he have. "Alas, Father! the penance is too grievous: The task is too hard: I cannot submit to it." A glutton, a drunkard, a lecher, presents himself to a confessor and acknowledges the obscenity of his past life. And the gentle prudent director enjoins him, for the chief part of his penance. "Go, and sin no more, lest something worse befall thee. Give to the Poor for the future the superfluous sums hitherto lavished in those luxurious viands: Flee from that tavern, that company, break-off all intercourse with that accomplice." And can he prevail with the penitent to acquiesce? Not at all: The sins are confessed: But not therefore renounced. "I cannot, *the obstinate mortal cries*, I shall be laugh'd-at, I shall be call'd inconstant, I shall be reduced to suffer some difficulties, or to renounce certain conveniencies. And who can resolve to do that?" A gentleman perchance shall accuse himself at confession of having made gaming his whole amusement; and perhaps the chief commerce of life; of having (in spite of a virtuous wife in want and affliction, in spite of children in ignorance and danger of ruin, and in spite of a family left in the utmost disorder) wasted his days and even nights in handling cards and dice or in rioting from one place to another; and thus lavish'd those sums which would have been more justly as well as fruitfully laid out in paying servants their hire, in discharging tradesmen's bills, and providing for the decent support of his family, for the education of his children: and the crying necessities of the Poor. And the confessor who is not willing to betray the duties of his function shall say to him: "Child! I suppose you to be sincerely sorry for, as well as sensible of, the Heinousness of living as you have done hitherto, in a manner so disedifying, so unbecoming your Rank in Life. I presume, by your confessing these Irregularities that you are resolved to amend of them. You will be pleased then for the future, by way of penance, to retrieve the time you have lost, and repair the injury done to God, by exchanging cards and dice for a spiritual book, in which you may learn how to live a life more worthy of a disciple of Jesus Christ; by exchanging the riotous dissipations of this or that companion for edifying lectures and conversation in your own family, from which, your wife, your children, your domestics, yourself may receive instruction." And what effect has this speech on the penitent but to render him refractory, and to convince his direc-

tor, that he was very wide of the mark in taking this seeming penitent for a real one? Or a lady shall come all powder'd, all perfumed, to the feet of a priest, to accuse herself (if happily she ever reaches to the forming a scruple of it) that she has lavish'd the major part of her hours at the glass, at quadrille, at assemblies, in visits and vanities; whirling perpetually, like a weather-vane, from point to point round the whole compass of worldly dissipations. "Alas, *says her Director*, this is too much, child. "Too freely do you abuse the divine beneficence. "God did not give you so much time, that you might dedicate to him so slender a part of it. Ah! reflect a little on the horror of idling-away, to the dishonour of your divine benefactor, so much leisure given you to work your own salvation in, and to seek his glory. But take courage, notwithstanding what is past. Look forward for the future; and cast your eyes back no more on your former conduct, but to lament and better it. Bare as you are of all those virtues which would become you, as a part of that half of the creation which the church dignifies with the title of the devout sex; your gracious God is still ready, with open arms to receive you to his embraces. But to merit this, you will be pleased for the satisfaction of his justice, for your sacramental penance, to shun that frequency of idle visits, of profane diversions, of dissipating parties; and devoutly retire within your little family to prayer, to devout lecture, to catechizing your children, instructing your domestics, and putting a little order and christian decorum in your family." *Ab Father! It cannot be done. Do you consider, that I shall pass for a Devotee, be thought melancholically mad, and may be after all become so indeed?* "Well then throw aside at least that superfluous pomp of apparel. Away with all this dangerous expensive vanity; that you may be able to acquit your stewardship faithfully towards the poor, by sharing with them the riches entrusted with you for their support." *Ab Father! What do you mean? Scarce have I enough to appear in a manner suitable to my quality. Scarce can I afford to appear like the rest of the world in my station: It cannot be done then, as you would have it. O Christians! Is this going to sacramental confession? Is this chasing the dumb-devil? Is this breaking silence to the purpose, or not rather keeping silence while you cry-out? where is the concert of words and actions in all this? Where is the satisfaction which is due to God's injured honour in such a fruitless repetition of the sins by which you robb'd him of his glory? Where is the vindictive justice which your confession ought to effect? And shall then the frequent confessions made after this manner be deem'd*

deem'd compleat ones? No, no: They cannot pass for such. They absolutely are not such.

Confession is a tribunal erected by divine institution to supply, in the church, the place of God's justice. "the Holy Sacrament of Penance, says *Tertullian*, by pronouncing chastisement against the sinner is the delegate of the divine indignation." And where is there a tribunal so corrupt, where is there a judge so inequitable as not to proceed to some chastisement of a criminal found guilty, a criminal condemn'd out of his own mouth? To adore God as sovereignly merciful, to confide in him as the source of all clemency, is good, is pious, is excellent! But to want him to be unjust, to want him to shew mercy at the expence of his equity, without any satisfaction to his injured honour either paid or offer'd, is wrong, is insolent, is impious: It is, in short, wanting God not to be God. And what less does the penitent (if we can with any propriety call him such) who, confessing himself an offender, is unwilling to repair his offence with a suitable penance? Again, the holy Sacrament of Penance was instituted by the Almighty as a sovereign remedy against the diseases of the soul. Let us but observe some sick person overpower'd by the rage of a fever or the torture of an imposthume or a stone; and learn wisdom from his conduct. A consultation is call'd for his relief: Violent remedies are proposed for a violent distemper; and how does he behave? Does he draw back? Does he storm? Does he fly-out against the cure? No, no: Let him be cut, let him be torn, let him be fear'd to the quick: He submits. Let the most nauseous draughts be presented to him, he swallows them. Let the sharpest blisters be applied, let the most raging caustics burn him, he endures them all. And he himself shall be the first to animate the trembling nurse or daunted surgeon to their office. Health is the object of his eager hopes, and therefore softens every pain. In short, as *St. Peter Chrysologus* says, "No cure is intolerable to a person whose life is dear to him." Ah! Thus, thus is it too with every true unfeigned penitent. He who approaches to confession in a spirit of serious penance must love God, for the future, as much as he disregarded him for the past: He must detest himself, ever after, as much as he fondled himself before. Nay, *St. Augustine* makes it the definition of a perfect penitent to have these two qualities of love for God and hatred for himself. "A penitent, says he, is a man angry with himself: And all self-anger is founded in love, that is, in love for God." Who ever loved God, without suffering cheerfully for God? Who ever hated himself sincerely, without treating himself with rigour? Ah Christians! Believe me: The man, who is truly penitent of his sins, thinks no penance too severe which can re-

pair the injured honour of the God he loves; thinks no punishment too heavy which can cleanse him of the sins he confesses. I have indeed met with a penitent, here and there, in this happy disposition. O how ravish'd have I been with joy to see an ancient officer, of forty years military service, so innocent throughout life as even to perplex me at a general confession to find certain matter for absolution; and yet so oppress'd with an excess of confusion and contrition for imperfections, work'd up, in his humble imagination, to all the horror of enormous crimes, as with a flood of tears to reproach me, with submissive remonstrances, for over lenity in giving him a penance, which the greatest sinners of you, Christians, would perhaps think too exorbitant a penalty! Ah Who could forbear, at such a scene, the melting into tears of tenderness? But ah! How few have I met with of such penitents in comparison of the many, who, offering themselves at every confessor's feet, are like such fantastical sick-men, as send for the physician to make him a recital of their pains and distempers, but when he comes to prescribe a remedy to their evils, they grow restive, if not quite furious! Such, beloved auditors, such are the gross abuses committed in the holy sacrament of penance, by which the confessions of a multitude of christians are render'd not only invalid but often-times sacrilegious, and for the major part at least fruitless. Such the causes, why so many dumb-men are not restored to the right faculty of speech; and, why the dumb-devil, instead of being cast out of their hearts by the sacramental grace of Christ, establishes his dominion over them more and more. It is time then that I proceed to point-out to you the causes of these causes, the principles of these abuses, and the means of removing them.

II. It is absurd to expect, that a man should go to confession with any truly penitential spirit, without being thoroughly acquainted with his inward state; nor can he be desirous to punish himself or accept of punishment, without being sensible of his guilt, displeased with it, and resolute to break with it. This requires then a previous serious examen of conscience, a deep sorrow, and a steady determination: These then are necessary, indispensably necessary preparations for a good confession: And therefore by casting an eye on the usual method of applying to these preparations among modern Christians, we shall immediately find-out the real causes of the little fruit they now reap from the holy sacrament of penance. And what is the examen of conscience now in use? Why---A Christian shall have had the courage to stay away from the holy sacraments for several months together, swelling the number of his sins beyond that of his days: The eve of some solemn

solemn festival comes: And, invited by the pious pomp of the season, or by the example of the devout part of the faithful, or perhaps by a certain something of sensitive inclination which prompts him to do as others do, he resolves to go to confession. Now judge you, if, with his thoughts so little in order, he has not a hard task to surmount before he can regulate his accounts of so many hours, days, nay weeks, totally wasted in the licentious courses of an unbridled libertinage? Judge you, how a memory ever so happy, ever so vigorous can avoid being lost and bewildered in the darksome maze of so many vices. Ah what difficulty will he not have to extricate himself from so many knotty perplexities, so many intrigues, such a confusion of complicated crimes! Who can help compassionating him beforehand? But why so? On the contrary, observe but with what incredible ease he dispatches the affair. One quarter of an hour's recollection suffices to conquer every difficulty, and to clear-up to him faithfully and distinctly all the sins of the whole year. But what! A quarter of an hour? And can so little suffice to reckon-up a multitude of sins, the variety of aggravating circumstances attending them, and the difference of their species, the mischiefs of their consequences? So little is required and no more? Justly then may we liken a Christian who examines his conscience to a man who surveys himself in a glass. Whoever beholds his person in a glass, sees himself, it is true; but sees himself all together. A mirror is a momentary painter shewing us to ourselves, not part by part. It does not delineate first the head, then the heart, then the arms, the neck, the dress and so on; But all in a groupe throws us out just as we appear before it. Such is the talent too of those examinations of conscience now so rife among Christians. And we may compare almost every modern penitent to a man beholding the countenance of his nativity in a glass. * *He consider'd himself, and went his way, and bye-and-bye forgot what a one he was.* * He has seen his sins, but seen them in a groupe, if not perhaps barely the very first outlines of them; and content with this, without farther labour or anxiety, carries his shapeless ill-digested matter to the feet of a Confessor. And is this, O Christians, to be call'd a penitential examen of your consciences. No, beloved, no: It is a gross mistake. To examin yourselves thoroughly, you must go more seriously to work: Your memory must proceed with solicitous leisure, and look through your past life, part by part. It must scrutinize every thought of pride, of lust, of envy, of rancour, of idleness, of impiety: It must call to account every word of falsehood, of pique, of detraction, of scandal: It must summon before it every action of injustice, of un-

St James i.

charitableness, of scandal: It must search into all the occasions of stumbling, remote as well as near, which have not been avoided: At what time, in what place, with what company, by what means, on what account or conjuncture so many, so great, and so various offences have been consented to and perpetrated against God. Let every penitent then who is truly such, erect in his mind a tribunal, which may be beforehand with that of the divine justice: Thither let him cite every fault he has committed: There let him search it, let him question, let him put it to the rack for the discovery of it's enormity: And there, in a word, fulfilling the part of an attentive impartial judge, and, managing the cause with severest nicety, let him forestall God's sentence, snatching the rod of rigour from the Almighty's hand, and force his infinit clemency to pronounce a full absolution in the words of a St. *Augustin*: "Even let us spare man because he has not spared himself." Yet ah how fruitless, I fear, will not this counsel prove! Where shall we and a penitent thus rigid with his sins?

It is not, that I doubt in the least but what many Christians use some sort of endeavours to search for their sins. But alas! too much reason have we to fear, that the major part accompany their search for their sins, with the desire of not finding them: And hence is it, that they suffer their passions, their most corrupted appetites, to live in perfect undisturbed tranquillity: In this, not unlike the senseless *Laban*. When *Jacob* departed with his substance and wives from his ungenerous father-in-law *Laban*, *Rachel* the *Gentil's* favorite daughter robb'd him of his idols and carried them off with her. When the old man mis'd them mounting on his steed, he pursues the robbers: And, coming-up with *Jacob*, furiously reproaches him: *Why has't thou stolen my gods?* * *Jacob* pleads innocence of the matter; and *Laban*, more irritated than ever, alights, searches and re-searches, topsy-turvyng all the furniture in the tents of his son-in-law, of his daughter *Liab*, and of the hand-maids; but all in vain: His gods are not there. *Having enter'd into the tent of Jacob and of Liab and of both the hand-maids, he found them not.* † It was no difficult matter then for *Laban* to perceive, as well by the change of her countenance, which without help of words pronounced her guilty, as by the posture she sat in, that his artful plunderer was his favorite *Rachel*; that *Rachel*, in a word, was actually secreting the idols she had robb'd him of. And nevertheless he never so much as attempts to search her. And why not? Ah! It is because *Rachel* is his favorite: "*Rachel* is his darling, best-beloved doating-piece, says a venerable *expositro*, and therefore is he afraid to disturb her." O how many *Labans*, dear-loved

* *Genesis xxxi.* † *Ibid.*

auditors!

auditors! How many *Labans* are there not, in the midst of christianity, who, for fear of disturbing a favourite passion, under the wing of which some vicious idol of their souls is secreted, either search not, or search with such fear of finding as is worse than not searching at all! You, O young man, have search'd your conscience; and, in searching, your conscience has call'd-out to you: "O that *Billet-doux*," preserved with so much tenderness amidst the choicest of your rarities, and read every now and then with so much inward revolution of heart, so much fluctuation of sensitive spirits, so much disorder of your thoughts! "But alas! What evil, you cry, can be in this? 'Tis affectionate and yet modest. 'Tis written with the pen of delicacy itself, and has never yet hurt me. Thanks to heaven, my heart is yet free. What harm then can there be, in reading it sometimes? And much more where can the sin be in keeping it in my possession?" O lady! Have you ever at your examen of conscience reflected on that miniature lock'd-up with such tender care in your scrutore? "And what occasion for reflection? It is a picture done by an excellent hand: It is a masterpiece: It is decent to the utmost. And can there then be harm in gazing on a picture? What tho' the original may have fired my countenance, can these lifeless colours bring any prejudice to my innocence?" Tell me: Do your eyes, never in beholding raise a sedition in your heart? Yes: "But still, thanks to the Divine Grace, I remain mistress of myself." And what surety have you, either of you, that, presuming thus on the Divine Grace, you shall long continue to maintain that superiority you trust to so injudiciously? O lawyers! O merchants! O tradesmen! There are certain articles in your accounts which are not so just as they should be, even according to your own way of reckoning; and much less according to that of God: Yet are there many years, that you have gone on confessing every month, and these articles are still left in oblivion. "But to adjust them rightly it would quite break through the oeconomy of our lucrative interests. Our quiet requires that we should never think of them." O Christian *Labans*! How solicitous are you in searching not to find what you search for!" O *Rachels*! O favorite passions! How many idols do you conceal! How many sins are left unsearch'd for, or are examin'd but superficially, for fear of disturbing you! Yet search you must, beloved faithful: You must search with eagerness to find-out, not only your sins, but all your attachments to them: You must endeavour to discover, not so much the idols alone which are hidden in your hearts, but still more the passions which conceal them. And then I will allow you to be in earnest in your examen, then I will acknow-

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ledge you to be serious penitents, penitents indeed.

But some of you will tell me, perhaps, that you have no irregular passions; and therefore, tho' so much exactitude may be requisite for people of vehement dispositions, yet you may live quiet without taking such a deal of pains in your examen. What Christians! You without disorderly passions? Are you then insensible to love, to hatred, to envies, to jealousies, to piques, to suspicions? You without passions? Whence then comes that secret transport of joy at the sight of a certain person? That gnawing discontent, when that other is well-spoken-of, advanced, or esteem'd? You without passions? Search, I say, *once more*, search your consciences to the bottom: And you will find but too evidently that you have scarce any thing else. "Alas I have examin'd myself over and over: And yet for my part scarce can I find sufficient matter to compleat a confession." Is it possible? O that it was not more probable, than your indigence is the effect of plenty, and that the only reason why you cannot find sins in yourselves, is that the multitude of them perplexes your attention and puzzles you about where to begin! Ambition, Avarice, luxury and revenge, are now the four elements which govern the pursuits of a christian world; and christians find no sins to confess? Lust of power, lust of riches, lust of praise, divide their empire equally over the rational creation. Every-one is now for fixing the character of man, of honour, of worth, of integrity to such sinister pursuits of sensuality as the modish iniquity of the age gives countenance to: Every-one is for making a figure at balls, at entertainments, at assemblies, at every profane theatre, with the patrimony which should pass to their posterity, woven into costly habits, melted into expensive dishes, or wrought into extravagant equipages: Every-one is for over-topping every equal in smartness of speech, in the caprices of fashion, in the licentiousness of life. The very word of God, so awful-so sacred, so salutary, is now become the instrument of witticism, the zest of a joke, the salt of a double-entendre: And the sacred sacrifice of the altar is reduced even among christians who pass for well-disciplin'd, to be matter of assignment: How many of them go to it by appointment; go to it by way of custom; go to it to shew or learn fashions; to meet a friend, to shew a courtesy or resentment, or to pass an hour agreeably in good company. Else why should a noon prayers, the last plank for quality-sloth, have a more crowded splendid audience than all the foregoing prayers of the day? Every-where game is going forward: Sporting is promoted: frauds, calumny, riots, licentious practices are encouraged and carried-on, in closets in assemblies, in the streets, in every place and in every season; not even the sanctuary is free from these excesses,

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excesses, not the sacred penitential time of *Lent*. All these are diametrically opposit to the practical duties of every christian. All these are committed by christians: and yet are christians puzzled to find sins to accuse themselves of! Ah! Too many and too frequent are the sins committed by every christian. Too plainly do they shew themselves in the irregularity of our lives: Too severely do we feel the weight of them in the indignation of heaven bursting on our heads: And still are they not known to us? Ah! What can be the occasion of so obstinate a blindness. The case is, that the licentiousness of our lives darkens our intellects: The case is, that our self-love lessens to our observation the load which oppresses us: The case is, that the interests and conveniences of a flattering world intercept our attention: The case is, that we are loth to survey them with piercing lights, and renouncing our own lights we even shun the advice of men of penetration who might help us to hunt our lurking vices out of their hiding holes: The case is, in short, that we affect ignorance, and are unwilling to find-out what we are unresolved to amend. Our sins therefore must not be examin'd-into; because once they are found-out, the fatal discovery would disturb our darling diversions. We must give-up those dangerous friendships; we must renounce those dissipating entertainments; we must throw-up this post, that charge, which yields to us with a considerable earthly lucre, a much more considerable sum of iniquity. But O dearest fellow-christians! Let me by the tender love I bear you, conjure you to throw-off this voluntary blindness. Examine, I conjure, examine your consciences, like serious penitents, if you seriously wish to be penitent. Examine your very examinations hitherto made. Examine the examinations you shall make for your next *Easter* devotion. Examine with the desire of probing to the utmost depth of your spiritual wounds. Who knows but such a knew diligence may discover to you all that corruption which has hitherto kept you in so gross a self-ignorance, and may force you to cry-out, with the perfect repentance of a *DAVID*: O my God what a "gangrene, what a mass of corruption, have not my sins bred within me, for want of looking into them seriously, and in time! O wretched folly of mine! O the madness, to let the evil run to such a length, without applying a remedy! While my fores are putrified and corrupted because of my foolishness."*

Many, you see, christians, are the errors committed in the examination of conscience. But ah! still many more are the mistakes, and much greater ones, which christians fall-into, their examinations made and even rightly made: Mistakes which relate not to the want of knowledge of our sins, but to the de-

fect of sorrow for them. O beloved! Too well do I know, that what I have yet to say will appear frightful: And I own it terrible enough to intimidate stouter hearts than yours. But still how can I love you as tenderly as myself, and not communicate to you the dread I feel at the words of my indignant God to modern penitents: But words did I say? Rather are they bolts of penetrating thunder: *I have attended*, says the Lord, *I have attended and bearken'd: There is no-one who doth penance for his sin, saying, what have I done?* What, my God! Is there no-one, who does penance, say'st thou? Absolutely *No-one?* Ah! What then are so many christians doing on every first *Sunday* of the month, on every solemn festival? What are those throngs of pensive sinners about, who, crowding the confessionals, so rudely strike their penitential breasts and mournfully cry-out, "*Peccavi*: I have sinn'd, through my own fault, through my most grievous fault?" Are none of these doing penance in good earnest? "No, not one: *There is no-one who does penance for his sin*: That tribe of self-accusers have not a true sorrow: Their sorrow is all fiction: A lie of the eyes: They weep indeed; but their tears are like the tears of marble moisten'd by south-westerly winds. Part of them go to confession out of custom, part of them to save appearances: Part of them again are led thither by a certain sensitive compunction, the abortive brat of a momentary remorse. But few very few touch'd by a lively lasting sorrow. In short, it is a prevaricating generation, who is neither sorry for having sinn'd, nor sorry for not having the sorrow they ought to have. *The prevaricators bath not return'd to me in her whole heart, but in falsehood, saith our Lord.*"*

Nor is there in this reasoning of the Almighty any thing hyperbolical, or merely emphatical. No: It is pure and simple and full of moderation, as we must see, if we do but form to ourselves a right idea of the sorrow requisite to true repentance. For let us consider this sorrow as the effect of our fears of hell, or of our desires of heaven, and call it *Attrition*: Or let us consider it as the fruit of a generous love for God, and call it *Contrition*: Still must it be a sorrow of heart, a sorrow of the whole soul. This sorrow, if we may believe a *St. Augustin*, must give the soul as much torture as sin afforded pleasure to the sense. This sorrow, according to *St. Bernard*, must rouse in the penitent such a vigorous wrath against himself as shall awake in God a tenderness for the afflicted sinner, which may soften and appease the just indignation he had conceived against him. This sorrow, says the holy pope *Gregory*, must reach even to exasperate the peni-

* *Psalm xxxvii.** *Jerem. viii.*† *Jerem. viii.*

tent against sin with implacable hatred; and to charm him with a sincere and unconquerable love of virtue. But, to omit the innumerable explanations of the holy fathers and councils, and confine ourselves to the bare genuine sense of the words *Contrition* and *Attrition*, that is, a *Rending* or *Breaking in Pieces*: This sorrow should rend, should tear in pieces, should dissolve with anguish the very heart of the penitent. Come then, O Christian penitents: Give what account you can of the sorrow you have hitherto felt. Can you say, that you have experienced any thing in your past confessions which seem'd big with these fruits? Did you feel any such bitter anguish; any such painful rendings of heart; any such raging self-detestation; any such implacable hatred to vice; any such melting, tender love for virtue? If you did not feel these; how can you flatter yourselves that you had any real sorrow? If you felt them; how comes it that you have given no outward signs of them in the change of your lives? Ah Beloved Children! Let but an enormous nail be lodged in a tree and pierce it to the sap; and soon shall you perceive that the heart of the noble plant is wounded. Strait do the verdant honours of it's foliage decay; each gaudy leaf grows yellow; each blossom faintly flowers-out without the seeds of vegetable life; and the unripen'd fruit (if any rises into form) falls rotten from the withering stem. So let a real penitential sorrow but pierce the soul in earnest; and who may not perceive that it is wounded? Farewell then to pomps; farewell to diversions; farewell to dissipating company, to entertainments and splendid equipages. The soul, all intent on ruminating the gall of it's own grief, can furnish attention, memory, life, for nothing, but, for the killing thought of having sinn'd. Unquiet, disturb'd and restless, it revolves itself, this way and that, towards the various objects which help'd it to offend it's God; and always with horror, ever with anguish and detestation. "O that house! O that unhappy creature! O that fatal praise, that fordid interest, that deceitful show of pleasure! O that company, that occasion which led me to wound myself, to wound my Jesus whom I ought to love more than myself! O wretched remembrance! And yet do I live? Yet am I not dead with shame? Yet will not this heart burst and be dissolved with grief?" Dear-loved auditors of mine: Who among you, with all the sorrows you have felt in so many confessions, ever felt any thing like this? Which of you ever address yourselves in words like these? With what a countenance have you hitherto thrown yourselves at your confessor's feet? With what tears have you bathed the enormous catalogue of your offences? With what fervor have you set about renewing your spirit? With what horror have

you look'd upon the occasions of sin? O heavens! what disorders do I not see? How often do I see you enter the confessionals, thence to pass to the sacred banquet of Jesus's body and blood, with those very gaieties and gaudy trappings, which you could at worst but go deck'd-in to a profane entertainment? When every dictate of decorum would require you to enter there in an humble, tho' decent, garb. I hear you declare your sins, in the same tone as you would a fable. I hear you palliate your former faults with fresh ones; "Father, I accuse myself of this sin or that: But it is not so much my fault as the fault of that person, by name, who provoked me, who tempted me, who made me sin. Or Father, I accuse myself of having told a lie by way of excuse: But to alleviate that lie with another; please to hear the excuse of this excuse. I was forced to tell it, to hinder such a-one from swearing, from cursing, from being in a passion." Ah! hypocrisy! Can there be real sorrow in defaming others to palliate our own iniquity? Can he be a truly contrite penitent, who confesses his sins, not to humble himself but to expose others? And yet how many such confessions are heard! How many such penitents seen! Ah Christians? How many of you even bring to the tribunal of penance your perfumes, your vanities, your sopperies and coquetries, your giddy or solemn airs, your haughtiness, your insolencies and impertinencies! Scarce do you breathe a sigh there; scarce do you spend a tear: To see you blush or turn pale, to see you faint or tremble would be matter of surprise: And yet do you pretend to have sorrow? And yet do you steal absolution from your deceived confessor? Ah! I should not have thought, that there could be a sorrow so genteel, that there could be so modish and easy a method of penance: At least in all the disciplin of Christ I have never found any thing of this sort.

But there is one reason which weighs with me more than all others to convince me, that the sorrow of many Christians who approach to the Holy Sacrament of Penance is but a hypocrite sorrow. And that is, the seeing so very little sincerity and steadiness in the good purposes they make in confession; the finding so little amendment in their manners after confession; the observing no improvement in virtue; the remarking, in short, so many lamentable relapses. Hear how firmly the great *Tertullian* speaks: There penance is necessarily vain, where no amendment follows." Ah my dear penitent! Are you then resolved, *say you*, to repair all your former mistakes? How do I not fear, that the secret affections of your heart are not in perfect agreement with the penitential disposition of your tongue! You promise no more to pursue revenge, no more to yield to the incentives of

the flesh, no more to be carried away by intemperance, injustice, ambition, avarice. But your heart in the mean-time full-well knows, that you will go on doing for the future, what you profess to repent of having done for the past. You have frequented bad company, gone in search of sinful occasions, given way to dangerous curiosities, promoted conversations offensive to modesty: You have confessed all this and firmly purpose in words to flee all these dangers: But are you not in your hearts at the same time doubtful, whether you shall go in search of them again the very evening after your communion? You kept not the last *Lent*; but then you promised last *Easter* to keep the *Lent* we are in. However you have since then found fresh pretences not to keep the present. For many years you have suffered intemperance to govern you: And now again the season of compunction revolves, and you insist afresh that you absolutely will reform. But why so resolute? What assurances do you give me, that to this new promise you will not be as unfaithful as you all along have proved to those you repeatedly made in so many former confessions? Or do you not even, perhaps, secretly cherish in your souls a moral certainty of returning to your next confession loaded with the same sins, the same specific guilt, which you come burden'd with to this, and which you now think you are sorry for? And can you hope then to make me believe that these sins, this guilt are matter of sorrow to you?

Have you never seen a woman in sorrow for the treacherous assassination of a dear-loved husband? The very sight of the fatal instrument which executed the barbarous deed shall make her swoon. Shew her but the empurpled shirt, or vest or other garment which first received the dire stroke: But point out to her the melancholy spot, where the lamented victim fell in breathless agonies, yet colour'd with his blood; and she too shall drop quite lifeless in your arms with the excess of over-whelming sorrow. Whole months, whole years are past from the cruel period which commenced her widowhood, and she still keeps irreconcilably averse from every one from every thing which is in tie or correspondence with the detested murderer. Wife, children, friends and family; and even the name of the cruel enemy, are all matter of equal horror to her. And the bare memory of the outrageous fact is so insufferable as seemingly to hurry her exasperated soul out of itself. In vain does all the Priesthood, with the Gospel, with the Crucifix in hand, endeavour to sooth her into peace. No, no: Nothing less will appease her grief than the glut of revenge; the offender must bleed, must die, must be destroy'd. But why all this implacable rage? Why? Her hatred is implacable because her grief is insupportable. The excess of her rage is

the effect of her excess of sorrow. You, beloved, would fain persuade me that you are in real grief for having offended, for having sinn'd: and truly if your grief has the symptoms I have just been speaking of, I will allow it to be sincere. Sin then has assassinated, not your dearest friend only, but the dearest nearest part of yourself, your precious soul itself, and has widow'd you of the divine Grace. And you, exasperated against the guilty traitor, have promised in many a confession to punish it; have vow'd an implacable hatred to it; and to persecute it above all other evils even to destruction. But what hatred have you shewn to it? What but a sham hatred could yours be; if your spiritual wounds still bleeding, you have made peace with iniquity, enter'd into league with sin, and hugg'd vice to your breast as your darling idol? Should a woman in the circumstance above-mentioned, within a few days after, nay within a few years, nay ever at all, consent to wed the butcher of her lamented love: who would not say, who would not think and justly think, that her former tears cost her nothing? Would not every-one have a colour to pronounce, that her seeming rage was all grimace, that her transports of fury were all the work of deceit, and that her pretended sorrow never penetrated farther than her eyes? Ah Christians! Neither must you then expect any more favourable judgment from the Fathers of the Church, while pretending to have sorrow for your sins, you are wedded to them. "You profess yourselves penitents, says the Great *St. Jerom*; give me leave then to enquire, for I am desirous to know, what it is you repent of?" You loved the amusements of the stage heretofore; and do you now like evangelic sermons better? You delighted one while in *ridottos* and assemblies: Do you now delight less in them and more in the air of a church or a chapel? You used to take pleasure only in profane entertainments: Is your chief pleasure now in the holy banquet of divine communion? Do you at present love retirement and piety as well as you have loved rioting and dissipation? Have modesty and composure taken place of the vanity and levity you were so fond of? Have you at last declared an endless war against passion, pride, and worldly punctilio to establish a deathless peace with humility and meekness? If you have not; how can you pretend to have sorrow? If your purposes are languid, and, like unsubstantial smoke, no sooner raised than evaporated; what can your sorrow be but fiction and pretence? You may form ideas, and flatter yourselves as you please: But for my part, I cannot think otherwise than with *St. Jerom*, that he only deserves the name of a penitent, who resolutely abhors, not only his past guilt, but all future occasions of guilt. "Him, says the venerable *Father*,

"Father, him (and him only) I call a penitent, who now detests what he once loved."

Thus far then, O beloved Christians, you have seen the abuses committed in the holy Sacrament of Penance, by which the confessions of a multitude of Christians are render'd, not only invalid, but oftentimes sacrilegious, and for the most part at least fruitless. I have shewn you the principal causes of such abuses, and have shewn you by apposition, the means to remove them. The remaining task is yours, to render this lesson useful in practice. What remains then for me to do more than to conclude? Accordingly let me conclude with addressing myself, in the first place, to you, my dear loved penitents. O precious souls of Christ entrusted to my care! By all which is due to God and dear to you, I conjure you, without delay, to examin into all your past confessions: And if you find among them one less perfect, less exact, than it should be; repair the important evil with a general confession. And let it be your fixed determination henceforth, never to set about a work so solemn and so sacred without a serious fervent application. After all, Heaven is a fine kingdom to possess: After all, God is too bounteous a sovereign to deserve being slighted: After all, the immortal soul is too valuable a being to be lost for want of a little pains. To purchase the first then, to be grateful to the second, to secure the salvation of the last, can we be too diligent? No, Christians, never: No diligence, no industry can be superfluous, can be extraordinary, can be too-much, to attain to three such important ends. And now, with all due respect, a word to you, revered directors of the flock of Christ. You well know, that the disorders I have here set forth, though perhaps but in a disorderly manner, are not mere speculations, mere metaphysical suppositions, but facts, rank facts, which stare, daily stare your sacred function in the face; which, spite of all your pastoral care, are every day committed. Ah! help then the erring sheep into the way. Those sinful souls, who present themselves before you, the lovely Jesus hands along, till he commits them to your care: And the most guilty of them are those he recommends to you with the most anxious tenderness. The same Jesus stands nigh at hand in eager expectation, that you present back to him, adorn'd like amiable spouses, those whom he brought to you and brought as odious enemies. The same Jesus waits to receive them into his bosom, when dismiss from your hands. Ah! never frustrate then his gracious purpose through any want of care on your side. Let him not prepare in vain a festival of joy in Heaven. Remember, that you are every-one accountable soul for soul for each single sinner under your direction. Do you then exert your industry

to unfold their examen for them, where necessary. Do you endeavour to invigorate their repentance. Do you remove their inconstancy, overthrow their presumption and animate their fears. Be full of tenderness, be full of fortitude. Remember that, when Jesus sent your predecessors to unloose the colt (that natural emblem of a sinner) he was not content with bidding them unloose it; but commanded them to bring it to himself. *Unloose it, says he, and lead it unto me.* * Thus much does Jesus say also to you, concerning every sinful soul under the power of those keys he has committed to you: *Unloose it and bring it to me.* Many, I know, are the directors who are ready enough to unloosen: * Would to Heaven they were not so many, in some places! Or else would to God, that of the many who unloose, they were not so very few who lead to God the souls they unloose! Not that I doubt of your vigilance, or mean to attribute, O vigilant ministers of Christ, to any negligence of yours, that you do not lead all to Heaven whom you unbind upon earth. No: You know the consequences of such a neglect too well to be guilty of it. You know that the least flattery shewn to the vanities, the corruption, the lusts, the injustices, the enormities of the age would be a treachery against the holiness of your function. You know that an absolution pronounced with levity, instead of leading your wards to Jesus, would lead them, with you at the head, to endless perdition. But how, Christians, shall your directors lead you, by sacramental penance, to your God; if you impose on them a false sorrow for a real one: a faint purpose for a resolution; a half confession for a whole one; or a whole narrative of sins unaccompanied with a disposition to atone for them? Unless you approach to them with all the dispositions of sorrow, steadiness, sincerity and vindictive justice becoming a true penitent, how shall they be able to cast the dumb-devil out of you? Without these dispositions you will never speak, or will never speak to any purpose; and, instead of departing from the foot of your Confessor free'd from the power of Satan, you will depart more absolutely enslaved by him than ever. Go then at this holy season to your directors in a new spirit, in a spirit of true penance; that it may be said of every-one of you as it was of the mute in our Gospel: *Jesus was casting out a devil and it was a dumb-one: And when the devil was cast out the dumb-man spoke and the crowds were astonish'd.* Apply the next time to confession in such a manner, as that the reformation wrought in you may raise in every christian observer an admiration of virtuous envy. But O my crucified Saviour! Unless Thou lend thy gracious aid, the mutes will not speak; or, if they speak, they will speak but

St. Math. xxi.

By

by halves, they will speak to no purpose: If Thou art not present with thy grace; the devil will not depart, or will depart only to bring back with him seven other devils worse than himself to make the wretched penitent's latter end worse than the former: If Thou do not assist; we shall neither be able to unloose the sinners, nor to bring them to Thee. O! Thou then lend them knowledge to comprehend the number and heinousness of their sins: Thou afford them the constancy to abhor them: Thou bestow on them the resolution to amend them, the courage to atone for them, the melting sorrow to bewail them. O grant them tears to wipe them off. Tears, O divine *Moses*, I implore thee in the name of this penitential audience, grant us tears; strike the unyielding rocks of these relentless hearts, and bid such floods of grief gush-forth, as, drowning us for a while in a sea of penitential anguish, may purify our souls and fit them for enjoying thee in the eternal mansions of thy glory. Which I beseech God, &c. *In the Name, &c.*

Third INDICATION of the PASSION.

JESUS the lovely loving JESUS, life of our lives and Saviour of our souls, was breathing-out his precious life in agonies of torture on the summit of *Calvary*; when, tho' the elements and all nature in agreement were dissolving with mournful resentment, mankind, as if no part of nature, was alone insensible to all the tender emotions of grief or compassion. Nay all the influence, which the cruel sufferings of this innocent Lamb had upon the brutal multitude who beheld him, was to urge them basely to add to the bitterness of his pains, the aggravation of blasphemous gibes and revilings. An humble *Centurion* was the only one, out of so numerous an assemblage of men, who, possess'd with a better soul, confess'd him for the Son of God. *Truly this was the Son of God.* For my part it staggers me, some-how, with astonishment, that, even at the foot of the cross itself, such opposite sentiments should find a place. Nor can I of myself comprehend, why one should adore the wounds of this crucified Lord, and yet others should gall those very wounds with fresh impieties. But the sacred text itself puts an end to my surprise, by relating the fact and then adding the reason. After all, what wonder is it, that the inhuman populace should blaspheme our Redeemer? They beheld him but with carfory wandering looks: *Passing by*, says the Evangelist, *they blasphemed him*: But the *Centurion*? O! the *Centurion stood over-against him*, says the divine writer. Yes immoveable, in front of the cross, facing the crucified JESUS, he consider'd every sore; told-over, one by one, his bruises;

and counted every wound his busied eyes could reach to: And therefore was it that every drop of precious blood, which dyed that sacred frame, seem'd with the voice of grace to cry-out to his soul: "O Centurion, Centurion! receive me by compunction into thy soul; for I am the blood of thy GOD."

In short, dear Auditors of mine! It is too sadly true: The reason, why Christians live so illy, is, that they take but little trouble to think well. JESUS is insulted with the tongue or the actions, because JESUS is seldom beheld on his cross, or is beheld but with fugitive looks. Whereas, to be beheld with any profit, he should be consider'd daily, and consider'd not with a passing volatile reflection, but with sedateness, leisure and attention. In a word, Beloved, we must survey this sacred object not with the multitude, but with the centurion.

This, with the help of GOD, I purpose soon to do. In front and facing JESUS on his cross, I shall survey the mangled body of my bleeding Lord, and dwell on every wound: And if you can resolve to bear me company in this doleful contemplation; I'll shew you what a havock your crimes and mine have made of the Lord of majesty. Who knows but from his sacred wounds the voice of grace may breathe salvation into the most harden'd breasts in this assembly. When the voice of this our brother's blood, instead of crying, like that of *Abel*, to God for vengeance, shall cry-out to every Christian: "O Christian soul! Neglect me not, receive me, hoard me in thy breast, let me not fall to the ground when shed for you; for I am the blood of thy God:" Who knows but the most obstinate of sinners may melt into compunctive moisture? In hopes of this, on next *Good-Friday* at nine o'clock precisely in the morning I shall begin the passion of our Lord and quite go through with it: On next *Good-Friday* then, I hope to find you all already here, preparing; to attend your suffering Lord. If you should rise a little earlier that day than usual; it cannot hurt you much. You cannot have much to do that day: And if you should, it cannot be a mighty grievance to give-up a little temporal lucre, for the love of him who gave-up all for you. What tho' you should, O Females, for that one morning, omit the business of the toilet, and forego your beauty-washes; the consequence cannot be great. The shorn disfigured form of the once lovely JESUS will keep you all in countenance. And you, O Men, if you should not have time to powder, dress, and come so very spruce: the tatter'd garband the dishevel'd locks of your Redeemer will set off to advantage the homeliest appearance you can make. Let nothing then discourage or retard you: But come; and come with penitential hearts.

SERMON

S E R M O N

On MID-LENT SUNDAY,

St. JOHN vi. 15.

JESUS, *when he knew that they would come to take him and make him King, fled again into the mountain himself alone.*

ALREADY had our Divine Lord, beloved Auditors, but just made his escape from the ungrateful persecutions of a people he came to befriend. Now again does he betake him to flight to shun the grateful sallies of a people whom he has just befriended. O insipid fallacious world! Thus it is that neither thy frowns nor thy favours can entice my Redeemer to pay thee any regard: so little does he trust to thy love or thy hatred, that thy insults and courtesies are alike objects of his contempt. Dearest audience of mine! What shall we say to this double flight of Christ? Beautiful indeed is the observation of St. *Augustin*, "that Christ being the word of God, every action of this divine word must be a word of instruction to us." *That is*, in short, every action of his is a sensible lively lesson of improvement for us. But what instruction, think you, can we draw from the flight of our divine Master? If his enemies pursued him to destruction; he could summon the powers of heaven to his assistance: If his admirers sought him to honour; he could direct their pious fervor to a conformity with his will. Why then retreat, and retreat so precipitately from either? Oh Christians! These fears of Christ are not for his safety, but for the safety of every one of you. Christ flees, not to avoid the dangers he apprehends, but to teach you to avoid by flight the dangers you have reason to apprehend. Every hour of our lives do the powers of hell persecute us, as the *Jews* did our Saviour, to destruction. Every hour do our sensual passions press upon us, as the fond populace of this gospel did on him, to abandon ourselves to momentary pleasures. To escape then the one and the other, what road shall we take better than that which our divine Guide has pointed-out to us? What surer means than to betake ourselves, like him to flight? He, whose safety was in his own

hands, fled from danger, to teach us do the same; mindful of what his Holy Spirit assures us, that *He who loves danger shall perish in it*. In a word, certain as he was of victory, if he pleased to engage: He chose rather to flee than encounter the occasions of unnecessary combat; on purpose to leave us an example and lesson, to flee the occasions of danger, if we mean not to perish in it. It being an undoubted truth, that the best of us all are but miserable frail creatures, by nature prone to sin; and so far from being like him, sure of conquering, we are certain of being overcome by the danger we despise. This if we credit the sacred expositors was the document our divine Master mean'd to give us in retreating to the mountain. And this it is which I purpose this day to enforce to you. He who courts the causes must like the effects they produce: And whoever embraces the occasions of sinning must certainly love the sin itself. Such of you then as are sincerely desirous of never yielding to the fury of Satan nor to the flattery of your own sensual appetites, have recourse to flight: For be assured of this:

I. The innocent among you will infallibly fall, in the midst of occasions sought, or foreseen, and not shun'd: *And*

II. Amidst such occasions the penitent among you will certainly relapse.

"Forbid it, Lord! O graciously forbid it! And
"in thy wonted mercy keep us ever on our guard
"against the guilt of wilful sin and every distant
"tendency which leads, tho' ever so obliquely, to-
"wards it. Never permit us rashly to perish in
"the danger of our seeking: Nor foolishly to court
"destruction, like senseless flies, in the very blaze
"which has already scorch'd us. No: But on the
"reverse, continue to hold out to us thy guardian
"grace and lights; that, taught by the past false
"steps of others (or our own) we may be ever
"mindful of this important truth, that the sole
"certain means of safety from a precipice, is, ne-
"ver to approach the brink."

I. There

I. There are but two roads that I know of in this valley of tears, by which we may arrive at the eternal mansions of bliss prepared for us. *The One is*, to live a life of innocence, so as to preserve our baptismal grace unfulfilled till death: A way this, which is beaten, alas, by few, very few. *The Other*, not less difficult, but happily nevertheless more frequently trodden, is that of resolutely renouncing a life of sin and steadily embracing a state of hearty repentance. Now this premised, I must insist: It is morally impossible to live wilfully in the midst of sinful occasions, and yet to remain innocent. Nay more (if more can be said) it is impossible for a man who involves himself in occasions of sinning to have a sincere aversion to sin, or not to lose it if he has it. 'Tis sufficient to strike terror into the most undaunted breast, to think seriously on the universal sentiment of the Fathers; who unanimously agree, that the lives of missionaries and apostolic men, though by zeal employ'd and exerted in, nay consecrated to, the service of thousands of mankind, are lives nevertheless surrounded with every danger, and extremely exposed to being infected by the corruption they are forced to encounter on every side; unless they set-out, from the beginning, well provided with the most powerful antidotes. And yet, Christians, terrifying as the thought is, it has its foundation in truth. The man, who, to succour a person struggling for life in the midst of a wreck, leaps into the seas in the height of a storm, has need of abundance of vigour and skill in braving the waves and dividing the waters: Otherwise he runs the greatest risk of becoming rather a companion than an assistant to the drowning sufferer: He may share in his danger, nay in his destruction, but cannot afford him relief. So the soul, which is not perfectly grounded in the maxims and practices of eternal life and familiarly versed in the arts of a refined piety, can never launch into the midst of the world (though it be with the charitable purpose of saving many souls from the innumerable occasions of sinning with which a secular life is beset) without utmost danger. Such a soul, I say, cannot engage in so difficult an attempt, without imprudently seeking the safety of others at the greatest hazard of his own.

For this very reason (if you will indulge me a short digression) when we coolly consider, on one hand, the ticklish tender unexperienced age, at which the necessity of the times forces-over into this mission numbers of the apostolic labourers in it, and weigh, on the other, the almost infinite dangers, occasions, temptations and snares they are here continually beset with, without any of those external restraints of distinguishing habits, or monastic retreats, which in other countries would

serve as help-mates to tottering virtue; we shall save ourselves a great deal of scandal. For, if all this be sedately reflected on; instead of being scandalized at the few indiscretions we may now and then perceive in some of them, we shall rather compassionate them, and impute their little oversights less to their fault than to their misfortune; instead of being shock'd at the absolute fall of now and then one, we shall rather be astonish'd, that it happens so seldom. Nay we shall adore the merciful providence of God, to whose special Grace alone it can be attributed, that, out of so small a number of missionaries in this land, so very great a majority of them should manfully persist in their virtuous struggles, and, not only bear-up, to the end, against the rapid torrent of sin and sinful occasions capable almost of overwhelming the very elect; but even should have strength enough of virtue, grace and zeal to snatch from the growing danger thousands of sinking souls to share with themselves an endless security: But let us return to our argument.

It is true indeed, that to compass this they are forced to live in perpetual war with themselves; to allow their passions, senses and appetites no quarter; to act with utmost circumspection: to impose the most rigorous laws on their sentiments and inclinations; to study a thousand secret means of self-denial, humiliation of mind and maceration of body; and often to retire into their own souls, there to converse with, consult and solicit God, by prayer and offerings of mercy and charity, in order to obtain fresh supplies of strength and grace; that, while they are preaching to others, they may not become reprobates themselves. Still do they, with all this, find it a difficult, extremely difficult, task to make their own election to glory sure and undoubted.

Now let us argue thus: Men grown old in the school of virtue, familiariz'd to prayer, mortification and alms-deeds, habituated to self-denial and the contempt of the world: Men so aver'd to sin as to sacrifice their lives to the subduing it; men, in a word, who throw themselves into the occasions of sin, merely from such pious motives as are capable of sanctifying them; These very men, with all their zeal and charity, are perpetually in danger of losing sight of innocence, even in the very act of cherishing it in others. Nay some actually have lost it, and come forth miserably distemper'd from the very places into which they enter'd on a quality of physicians. Shall the laity then nurs'd in luxury, fed with vanity, and cloath'd with pride, plunge into all the dissipations of the world, and riot amidst all its incentives to vice for no other motive than to riot; And yet never lose sight of innocence? "If we, says St. Cyprïan, if we ministers of God are

"are in danger of losing ourselves, even where the commands of GOD leads us on; with what hopes of safety can you advance, where the laws of the Almighty bid you retreat?" O Christians! It is well observed: If we with all our fear and circumspection, cannot be safe; will presumption and fancied security suffice to guard you from real danger.

"But there, *perhaps you'll say*, lies all the mistake. The very reason of such men's falling is their being too timorous and circumspect. We fall not amidst occasions of sinning, because we rush into the midst of them without fear." That is, in short, Christians, as much as to say, you are not apprehensive of falling; nor fearful of danger, tho' in the midst of it. Alas! There lies your greatest danger. Less should I tremble for you, if I saw you afraid of sinful occasions, than I do, while I see you so confident in the midst of them. David gave Saul a convincing proof of his deserving better from him than persecution, when he shew'd the latter the skirt of his coat, to convince him, that, with equal facility, he could have triumph'd over his life. Saul was in fact convinced of the injustice of warring against David: And peace was on both sides agreed-to, declared, and confirm'd with the tenderest counter-signs of friendship. Still, says the scripture, notwithstanding all their mutual pledges of peace, Saul went down to his own house, and David and his men went up into safer places. * But why into safer places? After the strongest assurances of a reconciliation and peace with his enemy, it was rather time, methinks, to lay down his arms. No, Beloved, no: David was an experienced soldier, and therefore more afraid of peace than of war. Dangers by rendering us fearful put us upon our guard; whereas a fancied security too often, by rendering us confident, renders us defenceless; and nothing will sooner hurry us into certain ruin than an ill-managed confidence.

David had already had the experience of this, in his engagement with Goliath. For how, think you, did a stripling so young as he at that time was, and so weak, succeed to overthrow a Colossus so corpulent and vigorous? But was it, do you imagine, David alone who conquer'd Goliath? No: Goliath chiefly contributed to the defeat of himself. The stone from the young shepherd's sling was what laid him on the ground; but the first weapon which subdued him was his own fancied security. Disdainful and self-confident the haughty monster was advancing to the combat, when approaching near his antagonist and surveying the candour of his locks, the sleekness of his skin, with a lovely bloom on his cheeks, but without any armour on his back, he sovereignly scorn'd him. When the Philistin look'd and saw

David, says the Text; *he despised him*? * And no more was necessary to destroy the Philistin. An enemy set at naught will always be the more formidable in the end. David for example had no need of arms against the Giant: the presumption of the latter served the former as a weapon to overcome him. There was no proportion between them for strength: The Philistin was all vigour; all weakness David. No matter: The Philistin's insolent scorn fortified the hands of the feeble Israelite. In a word, his self-confident pride overcame his own strength, as Isaiah says, *His pride and arrogance were more than his fortitude*. Say then once more, Christians, that you are not in danger of being overcome by sinful occasions, because you fear not the danger: Say, that apostolic men fall by them, too often, by being over sollicitous not to fall; just as a man, who, crossing a rapid torrent on a narrow plank, if he be seized with a panick; shall totter, grow giddy; and tumble-in: While another, who lightly trips over it undaunted, shall cross it unhurt. Still I maintain, that, if amidst the dangers, temptations and sinful occasions of the world, you behave like David, with fear and circumspection; you shall go through them with fruit and applause: But if, like the Philistin, you scorn them and trust to your own imaginary strength; with him, you will precipitate, the dupes of your own self-confidence.

And what room can you have for confidence that you shall conquer the occasions leading to sin: You, who are not in the midst of them against your will, but by absolute choice; with gusto and studied purpose? You, who premeditatedly frequent conversations, entertainments and public sights, where are perpetually going forward jests and speeches (to fit the best of them) full of levity; looks, oglings and graceful smiles, the more terrible to innocence for coming from beauteous objects? Is it very likely, that you will shut your eyes, your ears, your fancy, to the dangerous objects? Will you bear up against the amorous gaieties flying, in a thousand forms, about this room, that assembly, or this other public place? Ah! Too true is it, that many of you, have not born up. Already have many of you yielded to the tide of temptations. To yourselves I appeal for the truth of this: Say, Christians, was it never true, that, having enter'd into this or that house or company with your souls all your own, you have come out thence divided in yourselves, and left your thoughts wholly behind you? Is it not too true, that, in gazing on certain faces, listening to certain discourses and giving too much attention to certain sights, all your spirits have sometimes been in a ferment, and your imagination uncommonly heated? And can you say, that innocence has suffer'd nothing by the shock? Would to heaven you could!

* 1 Kings xxiv.

* 1 Kings xvii.

* Isaiah vi.

II. But, *methinks*, I hear some one say, "Alas! It is true, but too true, that my innocence suffer'd: It is true, that I have let myself be carried-away by a current of such sinful occasions. Yes, yes: It is true, that I fell, and fell, just as you say, by trusting too much to my own weakness. And therefore is it, that now, thanks to the Divine Grace, I go into the like occasions in a very different manner: In short, I carry with me such resolutions and safe-guards as may secure me from falling again." Heavens! What do I hear? You, O Christians, have been once overcome by this very occasion: And yet you return to it? And return to it, because you fancy yourself sufficiently guarded by your former fall? What! The very thought, which should make you more fearful, makes you more presumptuous? Shall I tell you plainly what all this means? The sense of it is, that you once fell; and are so much in love with the precipice, that you want to fall down it again. The sense of it is, that you are by no means resolved to divorce the sin, which you once wedded to. The sense of it is, that you pretend to repent but are not sincere.

Ah! what breast, which is yet warm with the least spark of zeal for the honour of Christ or the salvation of the souls of his purchase, can forbear melting with compassion and grief, to reflect, that all the holy Sacraments appointed by *Jesus* for the strengthening those souls and raising them above human frailty, have nevertheless so very little efficacy; that, tho' they are often (God alone indeed knows with what dispositions) received by us, yet do they leave our souls more than ever fickle, more than ever impotent in good, more than ever inveterate in evil. But ah! How much more deserving of our tears, is it not, to reflect that sinful occasions not avoided, are the obstacles, which, obstructing the efficacy of the holy Sacraments, frustrate the gracious designs of the Saviour of the world; who at the immense cost of labour and sweat, and tears and blood, has endeavour'd to purify human nature in vain. For as the prophet *Ezekiel* foretold, *there has been great sweating with much labour, and the exceeding rust thereof is not gone out.* * Sin and sinful occasions are as much embraced, nay sought after as ever. You preach, you exhort, you spend your spirits, in the confessionals, at the altar, in the pulpit, O ministers of God, all to better the world, and still does the world grow more and more wicked. And to what can we impute this down-hill improvement but to the stupid vicious confidence they are possess'd with, that they may forsooth quit sin without quitting the occasions of it? In short, as the prophet observes, the world is full of occasions; and mankind is full of eagerness for them.

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Think not, that your having often been in the midst of occasions of sin and overcome them, or been insensible to them, is any proof of your being invulnerable, or out of reach of danger. On the contrary, your danger is the greater, the more often you have overcome; as every victory lessens your fears and consequently your vigilance. *Sampson* had so often conquer'd the *Philistines*, that he fancied he had nothing more to do than just to rise-up, look at them, and put them to flight, as he had often done before. *I will go-forth*, says he, *as I did before and will shake myself.* † In fact he did go forth: But how? As he had done before, a combatant and a conqueror? No, no: He went-forth blinded, loaded with chains, and treated with ignominy and scorn. Ah! How many *Sampsons* are there not, in a spiritual sense among Christians? How many, who, grown presumptuous and selfish, after having been frequently in such or such a private party (with innocence, as they imagin, because they have not consummated a sin) how many of

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these, *I say*, confront the danger so often till they perish in it? Be upon your guard then, Christians, and be mindful, that you are not stronger than *Sampson*. Trust not to former strength nor to present experience. No age, tho' ever so grey in the exercise of piety, is safe against the occasions of impiety. The holy scriptures are full of instances of old men, who have been lewd, unjust, ambitious, cruel and addicted to the extremes of every vice. Nay you yourselves have with you the conviction of this truth, that we ought never to trust ourselves to the least occasion of sin. When your inward incentives to sin are ever so much weaken'd by sickness, grief or poverty; is it not plain, that the native heat of them in you is rather dissembled than stifled; since it shall immediately blaze-up on the very first change, and blaze with double fierceness?

So then, dearest auditors, amidst occasions of sin it is more than probable, that the innocent among you will fall, the penitent will relapse? Yes: Resolution reels in the midst of opportunities. No purpose, no courage, no experience nor age is sufficient to stand. What then have you to do? What! Why ---Are you innocent? Follow the chaste *Joseph*; and flee at the first attack: Leaving behind you in the hands of danger, your cloke, your substance, your all, when necessary, for the salvation of your souls. And remember, that Christ, the pattern of all innocence, nay unstainable innocence itself, while he was judging the adulteress, not to look at her, stoop'd to write with his finger on the floor. Or are you rather to be rank'd among penitent sinners? Follow then the example of that illustrious one, *St. Peter*, and go-forth from the dangerous porch where you unhappily fell. Visit no more that person, that place: Look no more towards that precipice, where you stumbled before: And remember, that the bare slippers of *Judith* were more than sufficient to overthrow an *Holofernes*. In a word, innocents! If you will remain so; flee the occasions of falling. Penitents! If you will not relapse; flee the occasions by which you have fallen. These are the only two roads leading to heaven: If you go beside these; you shall never get thither. But on the reverse: If your directors teach you otherwise, or omit to teach you this; they grossly flatter you; if you go to confession without the dispositions to do this, and acquaint not your directors; you grossly deceive them, but much more yourselves: Your confessions are sacrilegious and your road ends in perdition.

But why do I lose my time thus in labouring to prove, on one side, what is clear as the meridian sun; and, on the other, to inculcate duties of which not one will be practiced? What is it possible? Will nothing be done after all I have said? No; nothing. What, will no stop be put to excess? No

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once more be plain with you and tell you, that your perdition is inevitable, because your obstinacy is wilful. O God then! mercifully give these Christians the joy of thy salvation and confirm them with a sovereign spirit, which, controuling their passions, may keep sin for-ever from them, by keeping them ever averse, ever wide from the occasions of it. Hear me, I beseech thee, by thy unwearied mercy, *In the name, &c.*

Fourth Indiction of the PASSION.

THE annals of antiquity, who would believe it, inform us of a father so wretched, that his only son conceiving an unnatural aversion to him, was continually laying some snare or other for his life. Tired at length the unhappy parent of a life which, thus haunted by domestic treachery, was no more life but a lingering death. He takes, up, one day, in a sudden transport of anguish, a sharp-pointed dagger and conceals it under his garment in his bosom: Then beckoning to his unnatural son to follow him, he leads him to the thickest part of a lonely forest; where the horror of the shade may second the horror of his accents. Here he no sooner arrives than he hastily draws from his bosom the conceal'd weapon. Judge you, what terrors the guilty youth must be seiz'd with at the brandishment of the fatal instrument. But in the very instant, when he is expecting to be pierced to the heart with it, he sees it presented to him by his father, with these melting words: "Take this, my son; and kindly put an end to the wretched life of a miserable father, who is desirous of convincing thee, that he loves thee even beyond life, tho' hated to death by thee. If avarice has extinct in thee all the sentiments of a child; know, my dearest, that love will not suffer me to forget the tenderness of a parent. And therefore is my death become desirable to me, because thou art become anxious for it. But then I will have that death without danger to thee; that it may not be embitter'd by the prospect of thy disgrace and punishment. Dearest, tho' cruel! Why dost thou hesitate? Strike, my son, strike: There is no-one by, to accuse thee. Hark! How still this desert is! Behold the dagger in thy own hand! Behold this naked breast ready to receive the welcome blow! Strike, my dearest son, strike home. Kindly dispatch this hated father; and spend thy rage." *I strike? I dispatch thee? I vent my rage. Ah sa-*

ther! . . . But suddenly seized with such a grief, such a shame, such a remorse, such a love, as nature alone can kindle; but not even nature can express, he fell into a swoon: From which, extinct the former parricide (with all his rage) a new respectful son arose all duty, tenderness and love.

O obstinate sinners! How many and what snares have you not laid for the life of JESUS, your all-gracious parent! So well levell'd have your mischiefs been, that they have pierced him often to the soul. And so perfidious has your treacherous ingratitude been, that not the quantity of blood you have drawn has yet sufficed to satiate it. Courage then, hardy sinners, courage! As if he had not done enough; as if it was but a trifle to have given you health, beauty, affluence, and knowledge, the instruments with which you have hitherto wounded him; he offers you still his bleeding body on the cross: And, in this sacred time of penance and forgiveness, he puts in your hands his grace; that you may wound him over-again with the abuse of it, or spare him, just as your hearts shall give you. Why take you not his nails, his spear, his grace; and cruelly level them all against him? Courage, *I say*, be boldly wicked and strike at him again: Each blow shall open a plurality of wounds in JESU's heart. But Ah! You are Christians, after all, tho' sinners: At least you are human. And therefore once I have shewn you, what your tender parent JESUS has already suffer'd for you and from you, how cheerfully he gave himself up to your violence, and how severely you and I have treated him; I am in hopes, we shall not only mourn and abhor our past ingratitude, with the once cruel yet afterwards relenting son, but even study to love this gracious Father full as much at least as before we persecuted him.

Meet me then next *Good-Friday*: Or rather, let us meet our injured heavenly parent; that we may all unite in making him an honourable amends for all the injuries we hitherto have jointly done him, and bury our former guilt in recent grief for him. Let nothing then on that day interfere to call you from this solemn engagement. And what can interfere? You will have no banquets then to take-up, your time, 'tis to be hoped. And your entertainments cannot want much time for preparing them; unless your grief be of the hungry kind. The time then you spare from food you may afford to pious sorrow: And O Heaven grant you such a fruitful sadness as may entitle you to persevering grace and never-ending joy!

S E R M O N

On PASSION SUNDAY,

St JOHN viii. 43, 48, 59.

JESUS saith to the Jews: *He, who is of GOD, beareth the words of GOD: Therefore you bear not because you are not of GOD. The Jews therefore answer'd and said to him, do not we say well that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil.... They took stones therefore to cast at him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.*

INEFFABLE must that delicacy of Divine love be, revered Christians, which could induce the Almighty to extend his affections for us, as he has done and still does, to a double eternity, in some sense: Loving us from all eternity without any beginning, and desiring to continue to us that love throughout an eternity without any end. How unhappy then ought not we to think our love for GOD, in that it must be confined to a simple eternity immeasurable on one side only? That we are privileged with the power of loving GOD henceforth without end, is an unpurchaseable happiness. Still, that we cannot pay him affection for affection, by loving him with a love without any beginning, is an impotence so much the more piteous, as our created nature renders it irremediable. But then is it not the most stupid ingratitude our hearts can give into, that, instead of enlarging that simple eternity of duration to come which our beings are capable of, and dilating the instants of it, by beginning as early as possible to love GOD, we are, on the contrary, forever slothful, forever backward, in putting a commencement to the love of him? Equity and good sense seem to require absolutely, that, since we ought to render that eternity of Divine love, which is consistent with our nature, equivalent in some manner or other to the two-fold eternity of GOD's affection for us, we should at least begin the duration of our zeal for him from the very first instant of our being in possession of human reason. Nevertheless so inequitable is our correspondence to the Divine bounty, that we seldom give commencement to our love for our Divine Benefactor, till our

reason is almost on the point of expiring. *O foolish and slow of heart!* O Christians! Do I injure you in calling you such? My last discourse, I dare say, convinced you of the importance of giving yourselves to GOD in good earnest in the holy Sacrament of Penance. And your own consciences, I dare hope, have plainly told you the necessity of doing it. But are you therefore the nearer to GOD? Ah! Would, I could, with any certain hopes say you are! You resolve to do it, I know: But when? "O! There is time enough. To-morrow, next week, next *Easter*; or when this troublesome affair is over, when that point is carried, when this other sinful pursuit is at an end; In short, when I am at leisure, when I can do it commodiously; in plain *English* when I have nothing else to do." Thus is the great affair of salvation, the important point of establishing a solid peace with GOD, put-off from childhood to youth, from youth to manhood, from manhood to old-age, from age to decrepacy, from decrepacy to dotage, and too often to death and beyond it. How, like the *Jews*, do Christians of every age trifle with the maxims of eternity. If a preacher, a director, a spiritual friend, exhorts them to the reformation of their lives, to the correction of their vices, to the confession of their sins; in a word, to a little less licence and a little more modesty, to a little less fraud and a little more honesty, to a little less luxury and a little more sobriety in food and rayment, to a little less impiety and something more of religion; "Is the devil in you, *they cry*? Must we live like hermits? Must we have senses and not use them? Must we grow old before we are well young? Why are our appetites given us, but to indulge them? Why were pleasures created, but for us to enjoy them? There is time enough to grow old: And time enough when we are old, to repent of the sins of our youth. Do we not say well then, O Spiritualists, that you are possessed with the devil?" Ah! How like is not this reasoning to that of the *Jews* to our Saviour JESUS CHRIST? *Do not we say well, that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?* And ah! How justly

justly may not we say to such Christians as Christ did to them: "*If we speak truth to you; why do you not believe us, and act as if you believed us?*" If it is true that you have sinn'd, and therefore ought to repent; if vices must be renounced; if virtues must be resolved on; if sins must be bewail'd, confess'd, atoned-for; and fled from in their very remotest occasions: If a state of Penance, in a word, must be enter'd into by all, who have sinn'd and wish nevertheless to be saved; why must not all this be done immediately, in youth, in health, in prosperity, in the present instant, while there is a power of doing it. *If we speak truth, why not believe us?* Ah! Must it not be for the same reason which the Divine JESUS gives: *He who is of GOD, beareth the word of GOD: Therefore you hear not, because you are not of GOD?*" What wonder then, Beloved, can it be, that JESUS should deal with such Christians as he did with the perverse synagogue of his time. If he instructs their minds by his ministers; calls their hearts to repentance by his word, speaks to their souls by his grace, and yet they hear not or will not hear: If, instead of renouncing the deaf and dumb-devil, they will renounce or at least resist GOD, and think it time enough to return to him when they have no more time to compliment the world, the flesh, and the devil with; what wonder can it be, that Christ thus slighted, thus ill-used, should abscond by giving them no more graces? And if they persist in being expeditious in every earthly pursuit, and dilatory only in seeking and serving GOD; what better can they justly expect than that (once their stock of graces which they manage so illy is lessen'd, is wasted, is totally exhausted, and destroy'd by mortal sin) JESUS should absolutely withdraw himself from that living temple of their hearts, which they have so basely perverted into a den of thieves? Thus did he serve the rebel *Jews*, for perversely rejecting his gracious invitations to speedy repentance, and for returning his gracious efforts to mollify their stony hearts with ungrateful attempts to overwhelm him with stones. JESUS *bid himself, and went out of their temple.* And thus may he, in all probability, deal with you; if, deaf to his voice, or indifferent to his grace, you overwhelm all his mercies with the obduracy of delays. Surely, Christians, if there be any mistakes in your conduct, which want tears of blood to bewail them; this foolish dilatoriness of yours is one. And what error can be more deplorable than this, that Christians shall consume the flower of their days in the most useless, impertinent, pernicious trifles; nay waste the whole of life in ineffectual purposes of giving themselves up, one time or other, to GOD; but still with the design of never giving him but the wither'd remnants of old-age and imbecility?

This, this is the fatal error I mean to combat at present: This is the disorder which struck my reflection on reading the gospel for the day. It was a folly without example, in the *Jews*, to imagine, that *Jesus* would bear to the end their obdurate resistance against his divine lights. And it is no less a madness in Christians to imagine, that he will be for ever put off with the evasions, or even fair promises of Christians, who dally with his grace and their own salvation. How many years ago is it not since GOD erected your hearts, by baptism, into his living temples of his divine grace? And O! how little honour has he yet received from them? Is he then always to be thus put-off? Some of you have kept profaning those sanctuaries for twenty, some for thirty, some for forty, fifty and more years: Ever sinning and ever promising repentance. Is it not then high time to fulfill these promises? To repair the prodigious ruin in your souls, will the latter days of your life, think you, be sufficient? Weak, disordered, languid, impotent as you are at best; do you imagine, that you will be able to contend with vicious habits, vicious inclinations, and innumerable spiritual enemies, at a time of life when you will have more than enough to do to struggle with the difficulties and hardships of old-age? If you can scarce depend on the present minutes of youth and health and vigour; can you better trust to the uncertain morrow or to the time of dotage, sickness and imbecility? Ah! It is a deceitful notion: And the fallacy of that mistake shall make the matter of this sermon. Attend then, while I briefly shew you, that

- I. Every delay of giving ourselves sincerely to GOD is a sovereign ingratitude: In-as-much as it is a rude slight (not to call it a gross abuse) of the Divine Grace: *And*
- II. It is a stupid excess of rashness: In as much as it is presumptuously hazarding a total abandonment of Divine Grace and consequently of salvation.

" Ah dear JESUS! Thou who came'st to seek us,
 " forsake us not, in punishment of our past delay
 " of seeking thee. Full dilatory, we confess,
 " we have been as yet in corresponding to thy gracious calls. But ah! Henceforth we will repair
 " the time we have idly spent in seeking every
 " thing but thee. With joy we hear thy well-known voice inviting us to a speedy cordial repentance: We come, sweet Lord, we come.
 " Behold us from this minute, all thy own. To
 " prove that we are thine, we hear thy words, we
 " know thy will, and by thy grace resolve to obey.
 " And what, alas, can we without thy grace? O!
 " Pardon then our former tardiness: and let our
 " present

"present diligence call back thy fleeing mercy.
 "Hide not thy lovely face from us: Much less depart in anger from these hearts which thou did'st form for living temples of thy glory. But sullied, as, till now, they have been, help us to fit them for thy residence: And teach us, as thou alone can'st do, to redeem the time we have lost, by future assiduity; that thus beginning fervently, tho' late, we may persist henceforward in endeavouring to fulfill many ages in a short space; and may discreetly so improve each minute, yet to-come, of life, as with the virtuous product of the time still left us, to purchase and enlarge an eternity of love for thee."

I. Which of you all, beloved Christians, can help being incensed with a degree of rage against the brethren of the patriarch *Joseph*, when you come to that part of his story, where you find them consulting the means of putting him to death, at the very time when they see him coming to them loaded with provisions for the support of their life? Ungrateful creatures! To agree upon shedding the inoffensive blood of a brother, whose tender limbs were exhausting their strength and juices in painful steps and toilsome sweats, through quaggs and wilds and rough and rugged ways to bring them nourishment? O! ingratitude! O cruelty unmatched by savages! But ah, my dearest Auditors! Even we are guilty of the same excess: And it is our common interest either to defend them in their guilt, or to put an end to our own ingratitude. True it is, that at one time the jealousy of these brethren (not less allied in iniquity than in blood) arm'd as it was by inhumanity, did machinate the death of the inoffensive youth: But then there came a time afterwards, when they adored on their knees him whom they before sought to butcher with their hands. There came a time, when, instead of envying his life, they offer'd their own to his disposal, and thought it an honour to offer themselves to him for slaves. Why then shall we brand them with the title of ungrateful? Why load them with invectives? If they did treat him a little rudely, one while; did they not, in the end, make him ample amends? And is not this, think you, a tolerable defence of their cause? What! a defence? Rather is it an aggravation of their crime. Yes, yes: They carried (No one denies it) they carried to the throne of *Joseph* in *Egypt* an abundance of homages, all enhanced by the plenty of rich presents which accompanied them. What then? They were dragg'd to all this but by the violence of down-right famine: Nor would they ever have set eyes again on that injured face; if the elements had but proved more propitious to them. Whoever recants in such a manner, almost repeats the first insult: It is seeking to serve one's self

and not another, when servitude is courted out of mere necessity: And I will venture to say, that he does not give-over offending, who humbles himself only when compell'd. The very brethren of *Joseph* seem'd, at last, sensible of as much. They were sensible of the injustice of their tardy return. Hence, what terrors were they not seized with, at the discovery their injured brother made of himself to them! The prince had fine soothing them with the most tender language, embracing them, hugging them to his breast, generously bathing them with his majestic tears and giving them every assurance of his pardon: All was in vain. Still was their confusion obstinate at the sight of such injured generosity. *His brethren could not answer him, being surprized with excessive terror.* * Now let the ingratitude of these to their brother *Joseph* be compared, for a minute, with our ungrateful conduct to our GOD. Whatever nouriture we have for the support of life, all comes from him: And shall we then yet have the heart to offend him, for a long space of time, with a long series of crimes and guilt and treacheries, on the ill-judged presumption of adoring him at last: when, tired of a niggard world which has nothing more to give us, we shall be forcibly dragg'd to his throne to seek mercy and help, by the imbecillity of our faculties, by the decrepacy of our years, and by the decline of our life? And can such baseness find a place in a soul of any faith, of any common-sense; *I had almost said*, of any humanity? O men! O you, who have yet left any sympathy for common equity, for common honesty! O you, *I say*, who pique yourselves in point of honour upon acting fairly by every man! Why not deal fairly with your GOD? He was not so dilatory in giving himself to you: Witness that *Calvary*, which shew'd him bleeding, agonizing, dying for you in the very prime of his life. He, for your sakes, at the early blooming vigorous age of three and thirty, gave himself up to suffer tortures, infamy and death, on an ignoble gibbet: And will you, O Christians, never think it time to begin to live for him? O ingratitude! O perfidious injustice! O self-betraying folly.

You cannot, Beloved, be thus ungrateful to GOD, without being unnatural to yourselves. O how surfeiting is it not to sound sense to hear certain expressions, which are now become the modish cant of the age, among Christians. "Why terrify ourselves (*they cry*) with cloudy notions of the Divine severity? Why stand in awe of GOD as of a tyrant, who is ever a tender father, and a courteous friend? One instant is sufficient with him to save us. Innumerable and ineffable are the graces he affords in the last hour of life to snatch a dying soul from the jaws of *Satan*: And if we

Gen. xlv.

make

“make but a right use of them, the eternal gates of glory will not be barr’d against us.” But where is the probability, that you, who abuse the graces given you in the vigour of your senses, will make any better use of graces offer’d you at a time when all your faculties are render’d impotent by the agonies which engross all your attention? Nevertheless, Christians, observe: I go so far as to grant, what God alone knows whether or not he will grant you: I will grant you, *I say*, that you will improve those last graces of life; and, with the penitent thief, steal unexpectedly into paradise. But still so many precious years past, all capable of being fill’d with merit, all capable of enlarging your eternity of glory? Will not they be all eternally lost in an absolute void of merit or reward? O how fierce will your anguish be, when on the last verge of life you look-back and see the dreadful havock your delays have caused! When on a death-bed looking-back on your past life, and, ere you enter that new world, you know so little of, you cast a reflecting eye upon the hardships you have struggled with in the rude world you are leaving: In those last moments, which peace alone can render tolerable, what peace can you enjoy beholding the dreadful waste of time you leave behind you? Nay when you even recall your thoughts to look before you, and view the melancholy waste you have made of the eternity you are entering into; what can afford you peace? Who will be able to console you? What arguments of friends, or priest or confessor can pacify you from crying-out with inconceivable regret: “O fatal mad neglect! How poor, how naked, do I leave this life to meet eternity! O hapless me: That of a life so long I have no more to carry with me to the throne of my judge, than the languid remains of a few last hours! O foolish me: To have taken most delight in those days which I wasted the most! O! What have I not lost in losing them? O! What an infinit measure of blissful rewards have I not lost for all eternity, by lavishing the fruits which those past years I have idly spent would have produced, if managed wisely? O that I had begun this repentance, made this general confession, given myself up thus sincerely to God some years ago! O that I had listen’d to my early checks of conscience; to the advice, the sermons, the solicitations of God’s ministers; when in my bloom of life, when vigorous and young! With what a rich treasure of additional felicity and glory, should not I have amplified my eternity, more than I now can hope to do?” O my dear faithful Christians! Be wise then: And spare yourselves in time this cruel needless anguish at your close of life, by doing now, by resolving from this instant to do directly, what you will then wish to have

done. If the giving yourselves up to God so late be a sovereign ingratitude, be an extravagant injustice to God and to yourselves, as by what I have said it appears to be; why will you put him off any longer? Why delay your return to him any farther. Ah! Be this then the day in which you open your eyes to his lights, your ears to his truths, your hearts to his love, never more to close them but to sin! Ah be this the day in which every-one of you shall in earnest enter into yourselves and resolve to give less time for the future to the vanities, to the interests, to the lusts of the world and the flesh, less to mammon and more to God! Be this, in a word, the day on which you first seriously set about a judicious examen of your consciences, in order to compleat your perfect conversion to God; your perfect preparation for glory, for heaven, for eternity!

You, I dare answer for it, Christians, are all of you in general too mannerly, too well-bred, to bear the thoughts of giving a first affront to any man. You would not for any consideration be willingly rude to any of your acquaintance. Tell me then, O you who stand upon punctilios of civility, what rule of good-breeding excludes God from the privilege of not being insulted? Why is the author of all decency to be the only one you dare to slight and treat rudely? If the laws of good-manners give precedence to the highest greatest most ancient nobility; by what laws consistent with the politeness you take such pride in, are you authorized to refuse God that preference to allover beings which he has a right to, in your hearts and affections? For who so high as the most high? Who so great as the God of all power? Who of so ancient and illustrious a name as the *ancient of days*, the source of all glory? What greater affront then can you offer to God, than to slight, nay abuse, as you do, the lights, the graces, and gracious invitations with which he courts you to his glory? What grosser insult than to give audience to every ignoble passion preferably to the sacred inspirations he sends you? What viler treatment, in a word, could the most unpolish’d savages shew to you, or you receive from them, than the Lord of majesty receives from you? Ah! What more impious rudeness can there be than to give to the world, to the flesh, to vanities, to impertinences to sin, to *Satan*, the flower of your days, the bloom of your affections, the prime of health, the choicest fruits of time, the substance of life; and to put-off the Almighty donor of all good gifts with the dregs of your existence, the blight of your faculties, the wither’d remains of your hearts, the rotted rests of impotent old-age or infirmity and the polluted shadow of a life lavish’d in dissolute occupations or fruitless indolence? Ah! Can spirits so noble, so polite, so genteel, so well-bred, consent to treat the Lord of majesty with such indignant rudeness?

city? Look-ye, dearest objects of my concern! I will suppose your lives insured to an unusual old-age: You are to live a long life; and that life, to the very last, shall be accompanied with vigour, with presence of mind, with resolution of heart, with activity of limbs: I conclude, therefore, with you, that you may at your own ease in that last stage, step into the road of a final repentance, and with abundance of safety walk leisurely to heaven, move leisurely towards GOD. What! Towards GOD, *did I say?* Alas! With what face will you throw yourselves at the feet of that lovely Lord, with nothing better to present to him than the rotten relics of your exhausted talents: Rests which the impotence of nature has preserved, in spite of the strength of your vicious desires? With what countenance will you offer yourselves to the Lord of Majesty at a time when you shall become the refuse of the world and it's enjoyments; the despicable outcast of vanity, luxury and presumption? If you should have grace enough to turn to GOD, when the world turns it's back upon you; how will you not redden with excess of shame, at the presenting yourselves before his Divine Presence, all sullied-over with thousands of vicious habits? How will you not glow with confusion, to appear before him, all ragged with the want of virtues! What! To such a Lord, as our GOD is, who ever delighted in first fruits: To that Lord, who abhor'd every victim which was not a first-ling; who would accept of no holocaust from the priest, if not a first-born To that Lord, who detested every sacrifice where the victim was tainted with infirmity, blemish, or imperfection, will you presume to think of devoting hereafter an old-age, polluted, wasted, maim'd and tottering? What if a gardener of your own should deal thus with any of you? If of all the rich fruits of a plentiful garden you trust to his cultivating, he should present to you nothing better than the stale remains of a few rotten apples, a few sour grapes, or a few blighted nectarines, reserving to himself the choicest products of the seasons; with what indignation would not you look upon him? And shall the eternal Father, who is sole and sovereign proprietor of all we possess, be treated by us with a so much greater rudeness and irreverence, without the least fear of his resentment? Is not the horrid example of *Cain* sufficient to dissuade us from thus rudely slighting and abusing the goodness of our GOD? Why were his offerings rejected with indignation by the Almighty, while those of his brother were so acceptable? Ah! It was on the same account, for you-yourselfes may reasonably expect, Christians, if you persist in your stowardness to be rejected also. He deferr'd his sacrifice for many days, and then made it of the of dregs of his harvest. "His

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" fault was, *says St. Ambrose*, that he delay'd for many days. For it is the readiness and good-will it is offer'd with which renders every sacrifice acceptable."

But you have the instances before you of a prodigal son who was long contumacious and yet was kindly embraced when he did return to his father, tho' he return'd but late; of a *Magdalen*, who long a slave to vanity, was at last tenderly received, when she gave herself up to her Divine Lord. And therefore you blush not, perhaps, Christians, to offend him now, to slight and abuse his graces at present, whose future pardon you expect. Well: Be it granted even, that, you, who imitate their tardiness, will share in their return and reception. Yet ah! You must share too at least in the confusion they were under at their return. Alas! What blushes did not dye the countenance of penitent *Mary*, when bathing the feet of her Divine Master with her tears! Alas what confusion did not cover the repenting son, at the sight of that father, whose obedience he had so long withdrawn himself from! Inasmuch as now to consider himself no more in the light of a son, but rather scarce worthy of the privilege of a hired servant. Ah! how then, dearest Christians, can you have the courage to hazard a like confusion, by deferring your repentance to the last? It is possible for you, I own, to please GOD by returning to him in your last stage of life: But it is impossible, that you should in such case be pleasing to yourselves. Imagin, for a minute, that you are arrived to that crazy period, and that you have but just begun and finish'd the offering of yourselves to GOD: Think too you see your amorous GOD fix his eyes upon you with an attention mix't with pity and disdain; shewing to you the bleeding wounds your stubbornness so long kept open; and, with tacit yet lively reproaches asking you: "Well then, dilatory creature! Is your savage fierceness glutted at last with the havock made of this innocent friendly flesh? Are you at last resolved to give up-to me the little blast of life yet left you? Ah! This is not the time you should have chosen to return to me in. Better had it been to have done so, ere you had so grossly corrupted your faculties. For ah! how feeble, how little worth acceptance are they now! *Thou hast committed fornication with many lovers.* * How many lovers, O ungrateful uncivil soul, has't not thou prostituted thy heart to, ere thou bringest it to me: And now dost thou offer to be wholly mine? Why, but because thou can'st give thyself to none, to nought, beside? Now art thou charm'd with thy GOD? Why, but because thou art now incapable of being charm'd with aught beside? But charm'd? No no: 'Tis not thy love

* *Jerem. iii.*

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“ of me, but thy penurious condition which brings thee back to me. Therefore dost thou seek my heavenly mansions, because thou art now frown’d out from every other as a nuisance. Therefore dost thou now pay thy court to me and to my heaven, because the earth and the pride and lust of it are tired of paying court to thee. Therefore art thou desirous of being mine, because thou art become the refuse of every other being. Nor would’st thou even yet be mine, but that thou has’t exhausted every talent which can enable thee to love, or gain the affection or favour of, any thing besides me. Ah! *Thou has’t indeed, committed fornication with many lovers*, ungrateful, uncivil as thou was’t to me. *Nevertheless return unto me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee.* * Was thy reception to be proportion’d to thy desert; I know what a one thou mightest expect for this tardy and forced rather than free return. I should send thee back for thy recompence to the masters thou has’t hitherto served in preference to me; and in so doing teach others, at thy cost, the consequence of slighting and abusing the favours of their God. But ungrateful, dilatory, irreverent as thou has’t been, thou still art mine: *Return therefore and I will receive thee.*” O my dear Christians! Tell me: How would you be able to bear-up against such just, such stinging reproaches? On merely reflecting, that you deserved such, could you forbear bursting with grief and confusion? If it seems to you that you should have courage enough to meet them, surely it proceeds from a meanness of soul which makes you insensible how very grievous it must be, to generous spirits to be upbraided with such rustic ingratitude. Or if you believe, that it would give you any excess of pain; why will you labour to render it more grievous by prolonging, with daily procrastinations, your desired conversion to God? God, it is true may accept your repentance, tho’ ever so late: But you have little reason to expect that your presuming on it will induce him to do it. Rather have you the greatest cause to fear, that, as your sinful neglects of him have often obliged him to abscond from you with his grace, so may your presumptuous tardiness of returning to him incense him to withdraw himself wholly from you, never to shew his lovely countenance to you more. For, as St. *Augustin* very justly remarks, tho’ “God in his tender mercy has promised pardon to every penitent sinner, yet he never promised to any sinner the time to repent.” Why then will you, O sinful Christians, neglect the present time for conversion, which is the only time you can call your own? Why put off your repen-

* *Ibid.*

tance to the future which may never be your own?

Return then, return, O dearest fellow Sinners. Let me conjure you in the very words of your God: *Return* to him from this instant, by resolving on a serious, speedy, penitential Confession at this holy time. As many of you as hear me, reflect, that you have lost already but too much of life. Some more, some less; but all of you have sinn’d: Let all of you then from this day set about redeeming the time you have abused, by enlarging, with your future improvement of time, the eternity which is in your power. Farewell then, idle pastimes! Farewell, senseless occupations! Farewell, cruel enjoyments of the earth which have robb’d us of so many and so precious hours, days, nay years! O! How shocking is the bare remembrance of you? Barely to reflect, that, late as it is in life for us, we have so long, so important a journey, yet to begin towards heaven and eternity, oppresses thought. And yet the very reflecting on our pressing need: That we are so far advanced in our day of life, and still so very distant from our journey’s end, may urge us to press faster on: And thus shall the industry of a few well-managed months fill-up with precious fruits of virtue, all our former mispent years and amply repair all past delays. Thus shall we double our eternity of love for God, and force him to forget our past ingratitude and rude returns of all the mercies he has heap’d upon us.

II. However there are not wanting, even among Christians, some inconsiderate creatures so void of generosity, as to care but little how ungrateful they proved to God, if they could but escape his punishments. It is losing time then to expostulate with such, or to try to dissuade them from trifling with God, by arguments drawn from the noble motives of love and gratitude and due respect for him. Not one of these will touch their meaner hearts. Such language will only serve to urge them, after the example of the *Jews to take-up the stones* of fresh ingratitude to throw at God. Fear, servile fear and sordid interest are the only motives which have weight with them. And is there any dearth of motives of this kind? No, beloved, no. If hitherto I have not argued from principles of terror, to dissuade you from putting off any longer the happy day of your sincere conversion, the blessed period which shall renew you and make you live again to God and live forever; It is because my favourable thoughts of you inclined me to believe, that more exalted motives would better suit and more successfully affect such noble, generous, polish’d, grateful souls as those I hope I have to deal with in addressing me to you. What tho’ you have been sinners hitherto; after all, I trust,

trust, you are not quite so harden'd, that the reflection on God's goodness to you will not suffice to win you over to a speedy repentance. After all, wide as you have lived from God, tardy as you have been to return to him; you have still, I hope, some respect, some tenderness, some gratitude, some affection left for him: You cannot then be quite such obstinate offenders, that nothing but lash and whip can bring you back to your indulgent Lord, who has borne with you so long only to gain you to himself. If then the endearments of your Almighty Sovereign will work upon you; what need, what room is there for arguments of terror? Yet pardon, gentle Christians, if, to the soothing mild discourse, which, anxious for your safety yet tender of your delicacy, I have held with you, I now proceed to add some reasonings of a sharper more awaking nature for souls of baser alloy, who stand in need of terrors to bring them back to their expecting God.

And O! What terrors hover over their unthinking heads! O obstinate sinners! For now to you are all my words address'd. O perverse triflers with time, eternity, yourselves and God! In what have you hitherto consumed your days? Has it been in Sin or innocence: In virtues or in every vice? With God or with the world? Ah! Did you keep but each a journal of your actions; how full, how crowded would not every day's account appear? But of what? Of glorious actions done for eternity? For your souls? For God? Not at all: But of idleness, of impertinences, of vanities, of vices, of enormities, of scandals given into to please the world, the flesh, the common enemy of God and you. What tho' you have no journal by you; every witness to your lives, even I, can make it for you; and you shall own it, tho' short, a faithful abstract. As for your childhood I pass it over unheeded, that being a stage of life more directed by nature than reason. But soon as enter'd into puerility, O! What intricacy, what a confusion of disorders appears! From the first opening of your reason, how inverted a use did you not make of it? How soon was that hapless power assail'd by the troop of your humour'd passions? Assail'd, *did I say?* How soon was it not subdued and enslaved? What slaughter did you not suffer them to make of your reason, of free-will, of grace, of every noble faculty of your souls? As you grew-up into youths, how did not passion and vice shoot-up with you? How were you not, every year every day, torn and divided by the tumults of your contrasting appetites; by loves; by hatreds; by mirths; by melancholy? O the weakness! O the imprudences! O the rash attempts! O what innumerable fallies of despair, of presumption, of obstinacy, of inconsistency, made you almost each minute differ from yourselves, How have you not loiter'd-out such and such hours, days and weeks and months,

now at coffee-houses, taverns, and places of riotous resort; now at less nauseous, but not more improving parties; here wedged-in with sharpers at a gaming-table; there with ladies at a tea-board; incessantly employ'd at home, abroad, in houses or in streets, in meditating or in practising some vice or other; in drinking, quarrelling, fighting, challenging, tricking, defaming, lying, swearing, leud discourses or lascivious looks? And those unnumber'd nights of which the reckoning is lost? How have not they been consumed in dancing, fiddling, concerts, plays, and public dissipations, if not in private vices not to be named among Christians? And church? And the holy sacraments? And prayer? And sermon? Ah what splittings of half-hours have not they been hurried-over with; when you have honour'd or rather disgraced them with your presence, to loiter-away some leisure minutes, you knew not where else to waste; or when you have thought it necessary to save appearances? But let us pass-on to your manhood. Here indeed I remark less levity in your conduct but not less guilt: Rather, on the contrary, are your crimes more grievous, since you-yourself are become less giddy. What occupation has any-one of you given-up your years to, which has not fill'd the measure of your iniquity? To the bar? But O! what iniquitous sentences, have you not sign'd, where you were judges! What unjust pleadings, what unfair proceedings, are you not black with, where lawyers! Do you govern? O what disorders in yourselves and subjects! Are you subjects? O how refractory your conduct! O physicians! What ignorance, what indolence, what rashnesses are you not loaded with? Merchants, what frauds fill-up not more your coffers than your consciences! And O the lies, the perjuries, the impositions, with which you, tradesmen, are daily toiling to promote your sordid lucre! Every pains has been taken by you, in more than one way, and by more than one artifice, to soften and sweeten the irksome fatigues of this ill-spent mortal life: But for the immortal existence no thought has been employ'd. What time has been assign'd with any fervor or sincerity, to the real duties of your several stations, to your souls salvation, to the Almighty's honour? Alas, alas! Every instant from your birth to your present state (the time of your infancy excepted) has been nothing but a mixture of Christian profession and heathenish practice; a confusion of sacraments with sins; a perpetual circle of confessions and relapses; a detestable chequer-work of prayers, and fasts, and alms and masses, and communions, and luxury, and avarice, and fraudulency, and ambition. In short, O stubborn triflers with time! Your conduct has been as vile and as unsteady as that of the people of *Sion*, ever moving in a rotation of the same accumulated

mulated crimes: And therefore to every-one of you, as to each-one of them, may I repeat the prophet *Jeremiah's* (what shall I term it?) Lamentation or reproach: *How exceedingly vile art thou become, iterating thy ways!* * Ah heaven grant, in it's unwearied mercy, that no-one of you, by sharing in their guilt, may share in their punishment! But how does not the terrible menace of the Almighty make me tremble for every individual of you: *From hence also thou shalt go: And thy hands (of guilt) shall be upon thy head; because the Lord hath destroyed thy confidence, and thou shalt have nothing prosperous.* †

O the filthy detestable journal: Away with it. Already do I repent of becoming your examiner, for the sake of sparing both scandal to the innocent, and confusion to you, O Sinners. And why should I raise a blush on your cheeks with a remembrance of the precious treasures of time you have lavish'd; when all the blood which can flush your faces, tho' it should even gush through every pore, will not suffice to recall one mispent irrevocable hour back? Ah: Lament then and take-on, O wretched bankrupts of virtue, grace and time! Weep: Weep with inconsolable tears over the loss of so many valuable months, so many precious years you might have purchased heaven with. "Who, to use the mournful expressions of an ancient holy Father, Who shall restore to you the years you have squander'd in emptiness?" Of all the labours and sollicitudes you have laid-out (you know best in what bank) who shall pay the principal or even interest? All the thoughts, all the actions you put-out to any but God, are sunk into nothing but guilt. All the fair promises of the traitor-world now fail you: And that world, which hurried you, by it's insinuations, into ruin, is hastily running to ruin itself. Ah! weep then and weep incessantly, for all your remedy is in your tears.

Nevertheless so far, Beloved, is the perverse part of Christianity from weeping over the years they have spent the worst, that they laugh in their hearts at my persuasions; as if I meant only, by certain melancholy reflections, to rob them of all the pleasures of their greener years, to precipitate them ere it be time into all the gloomy cares of old-age. "Alas! Is their constant cry: Alas! Too rapidly already does youth fly away: Short is the space in which we can relish enjoyment; and ere we are aware the maturity of life will hurry upon us: Then, then shall we find opportunity and leisure enough to give ourselves up to God. Mean while we are otherwise taken-up. If with such untimely devotion we now break-in upon our only days of enjoyment; when shall we be able to get a taste of diversions? O *Satan*, Sa-

* Chap. ii,

† *Ibid.*

"*tan!* What flattering illusive ways thou has't found out to lead along with thee, companions to thy miseries, such multitudes of Catholics whom God, with amorous tenderness had destin'd to the vacant thrones of glory! But ah traitor! Is it their youth, perfidious serpent, which thou would'st gull them out of? No, no: Thou art persuaded, that probably they will either never quit their youth without quitting life also, or never quit their vices with their youth to live a life of penance and virtue: And therefore art thou in expectation, that, robbing them of the flower of life, thou may'st easily cheat them of the fruit also. But O my much Beloved, tho' obstinate sinners! How do not I wish, that you would once seriously learn to baffle the base artifices of this infernal impostor! I imagin, O triflers, notwithstanding all your tardiness, all your frowardness, that you are not such enemies to eternal happiness as to be resolved on being eternally miserable: And therefore, as you know you cannot persist in sin to the end of life and be saved, I do not suppose, that any of you are so stupid as to design putting off your repentance till death. No, no: You purpose all, I dare vouch for you, to be very good before you die. But tell me: Do you know then for certain when you shall die? Every-one of you is too weak, too irresolute, too pusillanimous to give himself up in this very instant to God: You all wait a more favourable opportunity: And yet are you not conscious, that you cannot even guess when that opportunity will offer? Nay are you not very uncertain whether it will ever offer or no. You do not sin now with the intent of sinning to the end; I know: But you live-on in sin with the illusive design of repenting hereafter, saying to yourselves, with the perverse sons of *Heli*, with whom you are so likely to be disappointed and (disappointed) to be lost, "Bye and bye, bye and bye. When we are growing old then will we think on doing penance." Bye and bye. *do you say?* Ah deluded mortals! This *bye and bye* is that uncertain future about which the devil concerns himself but little, so he can but prevail upon you to give-up to him the certain present instant. "Yes, yes, says the great *St. Basil*, this artful serpent, ever subtil at deceiving, often robs us of the present day's leisure, by cunningly flattering our imagination with the prospect of the morrow."

O the rank folly, Christians, of suffering ourselves to be thus imposed upon! And yet O the number of Christians who are the dupes of it! Ah perverse triflers with time, eternity and God! What but this is the cause of your delays? O the unhappy wife of *Lot*! What but a like argument was her undoing? For do you imagin, Christians, that, when she was seized with the anxious inclination to look-back, in spite of the divine command-

ment,

ment, and to cast one parting look upon her flaming country, no opportune remorse, no friendly check of conscience call'd upon her to desist and say'd to her: "Look not that way, O Woman: for thy God forbids thee? Who knows, that, for turning towards thy guilty patriots with thy eyes, offended heaven may involve thee in one common guilt with them, who dares't to accompany them in rebellion?" But, says the flattery of a temerary thought: 'Tis but for this one time. I will but cast this pitying glance and then press forward to the mountain. There I'll crave pardon of my God; and thus after gratifying my curiosity, satisfy his justice." She look'd then; she indulged the restless passion; she gratified the rage of her curious desire in the sight of those sulphurous flames: But then? O then, when she thought to move forward, when she would look towards the mount which was to be at once the stage and witness of her repentance, her life was at an end: Lost to all life, all sense, all motion, she was petrified to a statue of salt. In short, as St. *Augustin*, says, "Where she look'd-back, *where she halted, where she sinn'd*, there, there she remain'd." Long is it, O Beloved, that you, like this unhappy woman, have been call'd by heaven to seek your safety in the holy mount, (*that is*) in the sublimity of Christian perfection, by turning your looks, your inclinations forever away from those concupiscences with which the whole earth is inflamed, is burning, is almost consumed. Often has the voice of a salutary inspiration said to you: "Flee from this Sin, from that dangerous attachment, from this other incendiary passion or occasion. *Save your life: Look not back; neither stay in all the country round: But save yourself in the mountain, lest you also perish withall.*" And how often have not you like that female dupe of delay, rejected the wholesome cogitation, or put it off with a *To-morrow*. "Pooh there will be time enough to think seriously hereafter." But what, if that time, that *hereafter* should never be at your disposal? And this may very probably be your case. You, O young man, give a loose at present to every flattering passion and still promise your conscience a time for the acquisition of Christian virtues. But when shall this desirable time come? When shall all these fine promises be fulfill'd? "O it cannot be yet a while: I am not yet in a settled way." It must be then, I suppose, at some time or other of your manhood. But how can that well be? Then alas, you will have too much business on your hands: Then you will be wholly taken-up with the improvement of your substance, the advancement of your sons, the disposal of your daughters, and brigueing for employments or settlements for them, or else perhaps cark-

ing for bread to support them with. Much time then you are likely to have, in that stage of life, for acquiring any virtues you are not already possess of. So then, you think better on it, and resolve to put it off to old-age? But what, if you should die while you are young? And are you sure, you shall not? What certainty, nay what rational probability, have you, that your presumptuous delays will not be early overtaken by reproofing destroying vengeance, any more than many thousands before you have had, who, designing to be exemplary penitents in their old-age, have been, like *Ophni* and *Phineas*, made examples of terror to all triflers with God and his grace, and died reprobate Sinners in the very prime of life? But I'll go farther, and admit you to be in a moral certainty, nay, (if you chuse it) in a physical one, that you shall live to a desirable old-age. What then? "Why then, my passions will be tired, my concupiscence worn-out, and my blood grown cold: My affairs will be settled, and my thoughts digested; and the business of the soul I shall then be in a condition to give-up a whole soul unalienated, undisturb'd, unliable to the levities attending a more active time of life." O the fine season for returning to God! You too, O young-maiden! Why do not you answer the gracious amorous calls of your loving spouse the lovely Jesus? Why slight the graces, the invitations with which he industriously courts you to be his own? "O my time is not yet come: I shall give him nothing but a heart divided amidst a thousand opposit contrasting affections and desires, if I give myself up to devotion before my mind and station be fix'd." And ah! When, think you, will that be? When is God likely to have any share in you, if not now? Soon will come-on the seemingly joyous, the gay and giddy times of wooing and of wedding: And judge you, if, amidst the busy impertinences of those dissipated days, all for the most part wasted in nothing but licentiousness, you will be able to give-up many moments to God and to your soul. Judge you, if you will then have leisure to remember the nicety of Christian temperance in the midst of entertainments; the strictness of Christian reserve in every public or private party, the unspotted purity of tongue and actions, with the perfect piety of heart, always becoming the devout sex, whether maidens or matrons. There will too, very probably come the times of breeding and bringing-forth; and what great acquisition of virtues, think you, will you be able to make, when wholly taken-up with the qualms, the pains, the cares and anxieties of pregnancy? What tenderness will remain in your heart for devotion and piety, when your whole heart shall be engross'd by sollicitous tenderness for a husband and children? Will not the care and concern

concern for your family, in which most probably you will then be, take you wholly off from all thoughts of God and Eternity? And will you too, notwithstanding, trust to the uncertainty of old-age to grow good? Ah! Believe me, dear deluded fellow Christians: You deceive yourselves very grossly. Believe me: You trust to a broken reed in trusting to old-age. Believe me: If you are not till then provided with Christian virtue; you very probably never will be. Believe me: In your old-age, if you ever attain to it, the attachments of the world, the delicacy of the flesh, the inordinate love of pleasures, interests and pride, which have not been totally destroy'd in your youth, will root themselves so deeply, so thickly in your souls, as to leave God's grace no single space to grow in, much less to shoot-up one single-sprig of Christian Virtue.

Ah too truly is this the case among Mankind. Too true is it, that their choicest days are devoted to the service of the devil; who by little and little robs them insensibly of their whole life. Too true is it, that the desires of giving themselves up to God, are put off to the next day, the next month, the next year, till life itself generally fails. Thus shamefully is human life lavish'd: And in what? Why --- by the women, in eating, sleeping, dressing, visiting, play and fruitless diversions: In modes, in punctilios, in appointments and usefess if not hurtful parties: At best, in domestic cares, in impertinent niceties of family grandeur, and the triflings of an imaginary oeconomy. In short, to speak in the most favourable terms, they are *busy'd about many things*: But about *the One thing necessary*, what is thought? What is done? Nothing mere nothing. And how are the men employed? Few better; but many worse. If they are persons of birth and fashion, of power or prerogative; their days are miserably divided between the court, the bar, and their own home; now paying, now receiving homage; here intriguing, there deciding; and ever filling their heads with intricacies, their hearts with anguish; wholly devoted to the public, intirely absent to themselves: If they are tradesmen; how intensely are they not busy'd in working, running this way and that, to buy, to sell, to cheat, to lie, to swear and forswear, to dissipate their substance in search of more, to consume their strength, their health, their senses, their spirits in pursuit of gain, without respite, without breathing-time, without rest or the desire of it! Thus eager are they to *give to Caesar what is Caesar's*, nay more than what is his. Thus punctual are they to give to the earth their all which is of the earth, their flesh and appetites; nay more their souls and affections, which belong not to the earth, but to heaven. But to give to God *what belongs to God*, what eagerness, what punctuality is shewn? To

promote the advantages of the soul, what pains are taken? To think on Eternity, on God, what time is employ'd? "O That will be thought on afterwards." Ah! false deceitful *Afterwards*, thou traitor to christianity! Ah base and guileful *Afterwards*, thou murderer of Christian souls! Ah vile ungrateful *Afterwards*, thou cruel assassin of time, eternity and bliss! Ah *Afterwards*, thou sworn enemy to man's salvation and to God's honour! Shall man at the peril of his salvation trust to thy delusive promises, who has't so often fail'd? "Afterwards" (*do you say, Christians*) afterwards you will give yourselves up to God? Now you will persist in "sinning, and repentance will come afterwards?" O insolent presumption! So you may stone the divine Mercy with obdurate contempt of his graces, and God must not wreak vengeance on You? He may abscond from your hearts, while you are disposed to refuse him entrance; but may not withdraw himself wholly, and absolutely refuse to enter into them again, when you shall think fit to invite him with a too late repentance? What then do you make of God? Or what shall I make of your arrogance? Surely, if you do not blaspheme your divine Sovereign in words, while you persist in this conduct, you cannot be very wide of blaspheming him in your actions, and blaspheming in your hearts. Look ye then, perverse Christians, with trembling aching pity I tell you; If you repent not now; then, in all probability, you never will repent. If you do not now give yourselves up to God; there are a thousand chances to one against you, that you never will give yourselves to him, or he will never accept of you, when you do. You know, that the same God who says to us his ministers, *He who bears you, bears me*, speaks to you by my mouth: If then *you bear not the words of God*, now once for all inviting you to a sincere immediate repentance; *Therefore* is it that *you bear not, because you are not of God*. For *He, who is of God, beareth the word of God*, as my very text assures you. In short, if you trifle any longer with God; if you set him again at defiance. If, instead of returning to him, you *throw stones at him*, by rejecting this invitation to penance, which He now vouchsafes to you by my mouth; there are the greatest odds against you, that it may be, the last mercy he has decreed to shew you; it may be, that you will die in a state of final impenitence, and that He, whom your past Sins have forced for a long time to abscond from your hearts, shall, in his just indignation punish your obduracy, as he did that of the *Jews* in our Gospel: *They, like You, took up stones to throw at him*; But *JESUS bid himself and went out of the temple*: So will he depart from the temple of your hearts, leave you to die in Sin, leave you to be eternally lost.

So then, Christians, You think to put GOD off with an *Afterwards*? Ah! hear St. *Augustin* and blush at such self-deceiving arrogance. "*If Afterwards*, if some one time or other; why not now?" Yes, beloved Brethren, if you design one time or other to tread in a safer path, why not seize the present time, which is the only time you can call your own? Why transfer so good, so useful, so necessary a work to a time of life, which you know not that You shall ever arrive to? Whence do you conclude, that You shall ever attain to that month, that year, that stage of life to which you design to put-off your conversion? Do you know for certain, the determin'd age at which mankind are sentenced to hell fire? O all-receiving jaws of hell! Are there none but old-men, dotards, impenitents of fourscore, yet burning in the unconsuming fire? Ah! Yes there are: Too, too many are there in that horrid abyss, men of thirty, twenty, fifteen years of age, now and for ever weeping and gnashing their teeth. What then are you waiting for, O dilatory mortals, to secure you from those never-ceasing flames? Already is the eighteenth century almost half elapsed since Christ first preach'd perfection to Christians: And is not the day yet come for You, O Catholics, so much as to set about endeavouring at it. So long is it since Christ first gave himself to You, and is not the joyful blessed day yet come, on which you can resolve to give yourselves up to him in a sincere conversion? O! if you mean to do it one day, why not on this day? Why, ah why? "If some time or other; why not now?" Thus warmly does the Holy Father reason. But with all due submission to the saint, there is an argument yet stronger. Give me leave then to reverse the phrase, and you will feel it, if you have any feeling, wound more deeply still. I say then: *If not now, why one time or other?* You are now so presumptuous as wilfully to resist GOD: And why then shall not He, one time or other, pay you in coin with a determin'd resistance? GOD invites you to repent incessantly: You will not at present; And pray, why afterwards? "If not now why one time or other?" Ah! how many years has not the adorable crucified *Jesus* held-out his arms to invite you to the love of him on his crosses? And shall you, rather than disgust your insatiable passions, still persist in rejecting his endearments, and returning him ungrateful repulses? And shall *Jesus* have still cause to complain, by the mouth of his prophet: *I have spread wide my hands all day to an incredulous people, which goeth, in a way not good, after their own cogitations: A people, who continually provoke me to anger before my face?* * Alas, unhappily unthinking creatures! What shall become of you, if you continue to deal thus with GOD; who has sworn

* *Isaiah* lxxv.

to return contempt with contempt, repulse for repulse? O tremble then and avoid the terrible sentence: *There shall be a smoke in my fury, a fire burning all the day. Behold, it is written before me: I will not hold silence, but I will render and repay into their bosom.* † Have a care then of trifling with him any longer. If to-day you reject his grace! who knows, when he will ever accept your conversion? "if not now; why one time or other?" O souls more precious to me than the apple of my eye! Weigh well your circumstances, the circumstance of GOD. GOD will lose no one ray of glory of all his heavenly attributes, tho' you should absolutely perish. You, if you are not wholly saved, will be utterly undone: And all the misery of your ruin will be yours for ever. And if you seize not this immediate instant to begin the important work of your salvation; tell me, when will the instant come, in which you can be sure that you shall undertake it: You who are not assured that this is not to be your last? To-day your *Jesus* kindly calls you to be his own: To-day he invites you to yield to his gracious endearments: To-day, he entreats you once more (perhaps once more for all) to repair your former delays, by throwing aside your past obduracy, and melting into gratitude for his long sufferance. *To-day then, if you shall bear his voice, barden not your hearts.* ‡ And you know from your Saviour in this day's Gospel, that if you hear him not, you are not his. For *He, who is of GOD, beareth the words of GOD.* To-day then, O loitering Christians, to-day before to-morrow, I say, let it be that you begin seriously to yield yourselves up to *Jesus*. If you do not do it to-day, ah! when shall you do it? "If not now; why at some time or other?" What say you? You will, within a few years; when your passions are a little less contumacious; your spirits a little more turn'd; when your proneness to vice is something less vehement, the ardor of your blood a little more abated, and your thoughts and affections are totally settled? But GOD says not this: *To-day*, he cries: *To-day if you shall bear his voice, barden not your hearts.* You say: It shall be a few months hence; when that inordinate affection shall be gluttied: when this affair of interest is finish'd. No, says GOD, *To-day*, or never. *To-day, if you bear his voice, barden not your hearts.* But you chuse the holy-week to do it in. "Then, you think, the days sadden'd with the sufferings of Christ, render'd pompously melancholy with the penitential piety of the Church, will better charm your souls to compunction and penance." But I say, Christians: If you put it off 'till then; it is more than likely, that your designs of repentance will then be still fainter, your actual desires of it extinguish'd, and your

† *Ibid.*‡ *Psalm* xciv,

present dispositions for compunction vanish'd into smoke. God therefore bids you, yield to him on this very day. *To-day, if you shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* What! To-day you are unwilling to do it on any terms? In the name then of that Divine Lord, whose grace you now reject, I must tell you, that another time, when (may be) you would be willing, you will not be able. And, to return to our argument, "If not now; pray, why at one time or other?" In a word, what room have you to think, that you shall do it at any other time more certainly than now?

Answer me not, dear Brethren, as the *Jews* did our Saviour, *Do not we say well, that thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil?* Think not, that it is from any malignant motive I speak to you thus harshly. That God, who judges between you and me, knows that I speak not thus, for the bare sake of troubling your peace with stern prophetic menaces. But how can I love your souls, or save my own, without suggesting to you, that, if you yield not to the voice of God this day; if you put off still longer God's courteous invitations to repentance; and a life more innocent and edifying; it may be, that, more and more infatuated with the flattery of your deceitful senses, with the fraud of earthly joys and interests, with the violence of evil inclinations and habits, and examples, you will deeply plunge, ere you are aware, into some fatal labyrinth of vice, out of which, when it is too late, you will wish in vain to extricate yourselves?

Be mindful of the folly of your ancestors; And let their just chastisements be to you a lesson of more wisdom. *To-day* (this very day) *if you hear the voice of the Lord, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation according to the day of temptation in the wilderness, where your Fathers* (says the Lord) *tempted me, tried me, and saw my works.* The *Jews*, while in the desert, design'd, as much as you do, to give themselves up to God: But when? O! When they should be in possession of the land of *Promise*. But mean time were they continually tempting the Divine Justice to vengeance with fresh sins, continually trying the Divine Mercy with fresh delays of repentance, till at last they saw in effect, and saw to their sorrow, the works of his rigour, as well as these they had seen of his lenity. And they who ungratefully, uncivilly, presumptuously, trifled with God, putting-off their return to him till they should be in the land of *Promise*, and in a state of rest and tranquillity, were justly disappointed; were excluded for ever from the promised inheritance by untimely death; and died in a state of exile, a State of Sin, a State of obstinacy, a State of wrath. Have a care then, beloved, that you are not like them. Tempt not the Lord your God a-

ny longer with delays, with puts-off, with slowness of belief and hardness of heart. For should you, deaf to his words, and blind to his will, tempt his justice with future tardiness; try his mercy with fresh ingratitude; you will see and fatally see the works of his equity as well as you have experienced those of his clemency. You will find to your sorrow, when past a remedy, that God can be rigorously just, as well as tenderly merciful; that he can be angry as well as patient; that he can resent and punish as well as relent and forgive; and that, tho' he be slow to *Anger*, yet, when exasperated, he is terrible in wrath. Remember that he, who punish'd the *Jews* in the desert, can punish you with equal disappointment; if you copy their presumption. Remember that, if, like the *Jews* in the temple, instead of melting into compunction at the life-giving word of God, you take-up the stones of delay and neglect to throw at him as they did; he can hide himself from you as he did from them. From them *Jesus bid himself and went out of the temple.* Tremble then, O Christians, tremble for your safety. Sinners, or innocents, tremble still. For ruin, irrevocable ruin hovers over your heads.

What means that mournful veil, which, (this day) covering every Crucifix, hides from your longing eyes the lovely semblance of your martyr'd *Jesus*. Ah! It is too big with meaning not to make me tremble, if it does not you. It means, O innocents, that, if you delay any longer to improve the grace of God within you, if you do not from this day, this instant, resolve effectually to give yourselves up to his endearing invitations to perfection; soon shall you be no longer innocents: Soon shall he hide from you not only his image but his grace. It means, O Sinners, to remind you that, if you catch not on this day, this present minute, the fleeing grace he offers to you by my mouth, if you are not of God and therefore bear not his word which I now utter to you, but take-up the stones of obduracy and delay to throw at him and his mercy; He who has already bid himself from you with his grace, provoked to it by your past sins, shall, in just punishment of your future hardness of heart, utterly abandon you with his mercy and go out of the temple of your hearts: Never (ah never!) more to return. O dreadful hazard to run! O dreadful consequence of running such a hazard! Which of you all then can be so wretchedly ungrateful, so grossly uncivil, so stupidly absent to yourselves and God, as, in spite of him, to trust so dread a consequence to chance? After all, God has not been so sparing of his bounties to us, that we ungratefully should chafe his hatred rather than return him love for love. No: He has loved and still does love us to an infinite excess of love and fruitful love. After all, God has

has not used us so rudely, or with so little tenderness and complacency, that we, who pique ourselves on such good-breeding towards one-another, should give the flower of our love and life to vanities, and rudely offer him the dregs of our affections, and the offensive refuse of all other beings. No: He gave up to us in the most gracious manner all he had to give us: Lived for us, suffered for us, died for us. After all, God has not made our salvation precarious as that we cannot make it sure by faithfully co-operating with his grace. Shall we then wilfully consent to damn ourselves, by trusting to the uncertain future, rather than seize the present minute to be wholly and for ever his. No: My all-gracious God! Forbid that any here be so ungrateful, so uncivil to thee, so injurious to themselves as to risk the loss of thee forever, by losing this precious, this present, and (for aught we can gainsay) this final, critical, decisive minute. Melt then, my God, for thou alone can'st do it, melt the hearts thou hast already warm'd; and make us from this instant wholly irrevocably thine, we beseech thee in thy unwearied mercy, *In the Name, &c.*

Fifth Indiction of the PASSION.

It is no less surprising than remarkable, beloved Auditors, what very opposite effects one and the same cause shall oftentimes give birth to. The same sun-beams which dissolve a rock of ice into a liquid stream, and the firmest wax into a fluid, shall harden the most yielding marsh into a solid path, and the moistest clay into steel. Murder of all vices, has the nearest resemblance to the fire of hell, which at once, scorching the bodies of the wretched damned with insupportable excess of heat, congeals their very souls with cold impenetrable despair, and which, while with red-hot vengeance it makes their liver-boiling juices flow down their cheeks in scalding tears, chills their whole miserable frame even to a gnashing of teeth. If the butchery of shedding human blood, assisted by the extremes of distress or occasions, is capable of mollifying to pity the very heart of the assassin, which before was congeal'd into relentless barbarity; It has also the talent of hardening, in the breast of the injured, the softest, most tender and yielding compassion, into the most inflexible obdurate cruelty and revenge. For an instance of this truth we are oblig'd to the history of *Cyrus the Great*: Great indeed, if, with the world, we deem those such who have been greatly fortunate because greatly vicious. When this ambitious monarch, grown insolent from a long series of prosperity, and desirous of improving it to the enlargement of the boundaries of his already exorbitant power, had turn'd his arms against the *Scythians*, he marched against *Tomyris*

their queen with a numerous army; but found her prepared with at least an equal force, to dispute victory with him. Unwilling therefore to trust his fortune to the hazard of a pitch'd battle, he has recourse to artifice; feigns a hasty retreat; and, by this means, drawing the *Scythians* into a snare, puts them all to the sword, and, among the rest, the queen's only son whom she had sent to head them. Flush'd with this success he meditates nothing less than to render himself master of *Tomyris's* empire, and punish her with the loss of her life, for daring to defend her right and that of her people: Not doubting, but the death of a dear, a darling only son, the stay and hope of herself and subjects, and the choicest gem of her life and crown, must needs have soften'd her parental tender soul, into too weakly a compassion to leave her any power or even thought of making fresh resistance. But *Cyrus*, was mistaken: The heart of the injured princess, instead of melting into womanish tears and sighs for the loss of an irrevocable son, fiercely congeal'd into revenge. Whence, grown inflexibly obdurate in cruelty, she raised a fresh army more powerful than the former by as much as it was more exasperated; and, to repay his fraud with fraud, drew him into a snare in his turn: In which he lost two hundred thousand of his *Persian* troops, and after all, his empire, his glory, and his life. But not content with making her conquer'd enemy refund the life of her slaughter'd son, at the price of his own, she caused his head to be cut-off and thrown into a vessel of blood, with these taunting words: "Drink, tyrant, drink thy fill of the liquor thou hast so greedily thirsted after till now. Since thou hast never yet been satiated with blood, I'll en'glut thyself now to a surfeit of blood." The action was bloody in *Tomyris* undoubtedly: But the judgment was just. And what excesses will not exasperated compassion run into, when pushed too far by repeated injuries from unprovoked and unrelenting cruelty! O perverse Christians! Whenever I think on this passage, how do I not tremble, lest a like judgment should justly overtake some of you; if you persist much longer in your obduracy of heart against God! How long have not some of you waged an injurious war against, not merely a fellow creature, but the God of Hosts? Already have your crimes murder'd his dear his only begotten Son. And yet so far are you from any present dispositions to relent, that you are daily machinating fresh offences against your Maker, as if you mean'd to level at his very throne and godhead. Ah! What has the heavenly monarch done to provoke you to treat him with such base unjust indignant outrage? Was it an injury done you to give you life, health, beauty, sense and

every means of happiness; that you must pay him with such insults? Or, if you are obliged to him; if you are infinitely in his debt for life and every blessing you possess in it; why do you wage so obstinate a war against him? Why have you put his lovely son your loving JESUS to a cruel ignominious death by your iniquities? Or why shall his precious blood not yet suffice to appease your vicious rage? He came not to fight against you, as did *Tommyris's* son against the *Persian* monarch. No: He came to fight along with you and for you. He died not resisting you; but cheerfully gave himself up to your barbarity, to stem with his precious blood your fury of resisting him. Why then (ah! why!) is not his blood sufficient to dissolve your hatred into love, your cruelty into compassion on the generous victim of your former unpurchased enmity: Is it not enough, that you have butcher'd God's eternal son; unless you try (if possible) to unthroned the Father also? Do you not think yourselves secure from their resentment, after crucifying one Divine Person of the Trinity; unless you crucify the other two? Ah! Know, that not one of them regrets the death of JESUS; but your ill use of it. All three consented cheerfully to give him up to the painful shameful death your sins prepared for him; and gave him up in fact, to stop your causeless persecution of him. They are not then disposed to resent the prodigality with which you have hitherto shed that precious liquor; if it but melts your hearts at last into compunctive tenderness for him. Ah! Yield then, stubborn Sinners; yield, ere it be too late, to the voice of JESUS's blood.

On next *Good-Friday*, in a recital of the passion of this injured Lord, will be exposed to public view the sanguant wounds and cuts, and sores and gashes; the stripes and bruises, dirt and spittle, and indignities, with which the lovely form of tender inoffensive Jesus was disfigured by the still reeking guilt of your unruly lives. Then will you hear from every bleeding pore of his, the secret voice of mercy crying to you, not in the exasperated tone of a *Tommyris*, but in the soothing, softening accents of unwearied bounty: "O Sinners! Stubborn Sinners! Will nothing but my blood content you? Behold! I have shed it in profusion for you. And was there not already blood enough of mine disbursed to ransom innumerable worlds; I would with pleasure be crucified again for every one. Nay, gladly would I open every pore again to bleed for every one of you; had I not bled enough for all. Ah! Let not this blood then flow for you, in vain. Say only to my eternal Father, after the *Jews*, but in a purer sense than they, *Be his blood upon us and our children*, on our actions, to melt us into contrite love for him: it shall flow upon your hearts in a full stream

"not of resentment and hatred, but of forgiveness and infinit affection. Come then relent at the Sight of so much blood lavish'd by you. But lavish'd? No: I shall not think it lavish'd if you forbear henceforth to trample it under foot. *Sprinkle yourselves but with this byssop*, this purifying liquor; and you shall be cleansed from all the filth of the past crimes with which you have martyr'd me: Wash you with this all-rectifying lotion, and, from all-red as you are with butcheries of my innocent flesh, you shall become whiter than snow. Nay drink it inwardly, and bathe your very souls with it. *Drink, Sinners, Drink your fill of this liquor, which you so greedily thirsted after while in Sin. Tho' once your passions could not have their glut of my blood; at least now let my blood satiate your affections to a perfect plenitude of grace and bliss, and glory.*" Who knows but these endearing sentiments of loving all-forgiving clemency, which every gaping wound of his is big with, may overcome your yet unconquer'd obstinacy? who knows, but, listening with an ear of grace, to this pathetic language of your God, you may in earnest, once for all, resolve to give yourselves to him in a sincere immediate repentance? In hopes of this it is that I presume to crave, that next *Good-Friday* you would devote a portion of your time to a close pious serious contemplation of the sufferings of your Lord, that his cruential passion may not be renew'd in vain for you. But then beware you put not off your purpose of repentance till that day. None of you all are certain you shall live to see it. And tho' you should; if you go on till then exasperating your already more than sufficiently exasperated Saviour; his patience may by that time be urg'd to fury, his clemency to rigour, and his forgiveness to chastising vengeance. Remember that from the blood of JESUS, flow two different streams; a flood of boundless bliss to innocents and contrite penitents; but to relentless reprobates a flood of unextinguishable fire. Have a care then, lest, by persisting in a state of Sin one day, one instant longer, you force insulted JESUS to reverse your sentence. O what a dreadful case will not yours be; if to-morrow, next hour, a few minutes hence, your yet compassionate Redeemer, incensed at your presumptuously delaying this, should leave you in his wrath, plunge you dead to grace in the flood of fire, kindled by his precious blood abused, and with stern indignation say to any one of you: Drink, blood-thirsty wretch, even drink thy fill of the liquor thou hast thirsted after hitherto. Since thou wouldst not be satiated with my precious blood, to a satiety of bliss; go glut thyself even to a surfeit of the interminable flood of fire which thy perverse abuse of that blood has drawn from it! O what a dread-

ful sentence to incur! And what ground can you have to hope that this will not be your mis-hap? What room will you have to appeal from the Almighty's rigour in the succeeding minute; if in the present, when he offers you his saving mercy, you

refuse it. Go then, Christians, and, ere *Good-Friday* comes; repent to-day, and be in readiness for it. This day, this instant begin and give yourselves to GOD. This instant, is your own. One moment of *Good-Friday* may not be so.

S E R M O N

On PALM SUNDAY.

St. MATTHEW xxi. 1; 7, 8, 9.

When Jesus and his disciples drew nigh to Jerusalem; They brought an ass with it's colt; and laid their garments upon them, and made him sit thereon. And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; and others did cut boughs from the trees and strew'd them in the way: And the crowds which went before, and which follow'd cried-out saying: Hosanna to the SON OF DAVID.

WHAT mortal, who was witness to this triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem, could have imagin'd, Beloved Christians, but that his persecutions were now at an end; that he had gain'd a final victory over the obduracy of the Jews; and that he would thenceforth forever reign as glorious in their love, obedience and cordial respect, as he now did in their acclamations, attendance and external homage; that, in a word, he would be received into their hearts with the same joy as they honour'd him with in their streets? Which of you, Beloved, had you been present at this mirthful scene, would have expected to see it, in less than six days, changed into that mournful one which began with his passion? At hearing a joyous innumerable populace, made-up of men of every state, crying-out, with loud and chearful huzzas, with one united harmony of voice, and with transporting gladness on each face and feature, *Hosanna to the Son of David*; how would you not have scorn'd the prophet who might have told you; "Mingle not your joy with this rude fickle rabble: 'Tis mockery all. However serious they seem and be at present, ere the sun runs six times it's round, These ruffians, who now salute your Jesus for their King, shall impudently disown him; changing their note from *Hosanna to the Son of David*, to *We have no other King than Caesar*. They, who now confess him *the blessed who came in the name of the Lord*, shall accuse him of being an

impostor: They, who now strip-off their garments to make them carpets for him to pass over in triumph, shall strip him of his garments to make their cruelty triumph over him: They who now carry palms before him, shall soon prepare an ignominious cross for him to bear before themselves: They, who now furnish him with laurel, shall furnish him with a crown of thorns: Now they cry-out *long live; Hosanna to the Son of David*: But shortly they will cry-out, *Crucify him: Let him die!*" Ah Christians! How little would you not have credited such a prophecy; and how much would you have despised the prophet! And yet, Beloved, six days would have convinced you that what seem'd so improbable, so almost impossible, was nothing less than fatal truth. Yes; too truly was this fact foretold not to take place. Too plainly was that perverse people warn'd of it, not to be self-condemn'd in perpetrating it. The same prophets, who denounced to them this triumphant entry of Jesus to their City, *Say ye to the daughter of Sion: Behold thy King cometh to thee meek and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of her who is used to the yoke*: * The very same caution'd them enough of their inconstancy, to put them on their guard against it. The same foreboded their indignantly postponing him to thieves and murders: *With the wicked, he was reputed*. † The same fore-caution'd them, that, unless they resisted their perverse inclinations, they would put him at last to death: *I will strike the pastor, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed*. ‡ They foretold it: But ah! of what benefit did it prove to warn this unsteady people? They foretold it: And ah! too truly did it not come to pass? O shocking perversity! So then this day, we are to celebrate the triumph of our Jesus in Jerusalem. But how shall we celebrate it? With joy or mourning? With smiles or tears? With transports of alacrity or with convulsions of distress? What shall I say, Christians? To-

* *Isaiah* lxii. *Zach.* ix. † *Isaiah* liii. ‡ *Zach.* xiii.

day it seems JESUS CHRIST is honour'd, is homaged, is received into *Jerusalem*, amidst the loudest acclamations of joy, by a numerous multitude of people: To-day they flock about him, to proclaim him their King, their Messiah, their deliverer sent from God: To-day they run after him, run beside him, run before him, to express, in the eagerness of their motions, the earnestness of their alacrity at his coming: To-day they strew leaves before him, strew flowers before him, strew carpets before him, and, to shew that they are ready to lay their all at his feet, strip themselves of their very garments to strew them before him: To-day, in a word, They divest the palm of it's foliage to ornament his triumph, strip the laurel to adorn his brows with a diadem, and hurry him to the temple to anoint him their monarch. Shall I rejoice then? Ah how can I? All this, I know, is his due. But then what pleasure can this just tribute of homage paid him give to me; when I consider how short a time it will last? I too could leap for joy to see justice done to my Saviour once in his life; did I not know that it is done by a fickle, faithless, false, inconsistent generation, who, ere the week be half-elaps'd, shall disgrace him as much as they have honour'd him; shall revile him more than they have homaged him; and change their acclamations of joy into opprobrious invectives. Ah! When I consider in how few days they shall treat him like an usurper, like a hypocrite, like an impostor; throw stones at him, spit at him, spit on him, buffet him, scourge him; strip him of his cloaths, strip him of his flesh; cover him with the coat of a fool, with a robe of ridicule; change his palm into a reed, his laurel into a crown of thorns; and, after indignantly haling him from tribunal to tribunal, through these very streets he now rides along in triumph, instead of saluting him as their true King of the lineage of *David*, with a *Hosanna to the Son of David*, postpone him to a murderer, and insult him with a barbarous cry of *Crucify, crucify him*; instead of giving a loose to joy, I lose all patience. "But what is all this to the purpose, you'll say? That horrid scene is past, and Jesus now secure, from all those insults, in his eternal glory. That cruelty of Jewish rage can no more be repeated; and therefore now we may renew with joy the celebration of our Saviour's triumph. For, after all, what have we to do with the Jews and what they did?" Ah! What indeed? Believe me, dear-loved Auditors: 'Tis not about the Jews, that I am any-ways concern'd. I know, they were but instruments to serve my Saviour's purpose of redeeming me and you. I know, that he who fled into the mountains himself alone, when sought-for to be made King by such as were sincere enough, to have maintain'd their loyalty to him in-

violable: He would now also have fled, instead of entering *Jerusalem* triumphantly? had he not foreseen that this triumph was to be the introduction to his passion. 'Tis not then the treachery of the Jews which damps in me the joy of this victorious day. No, no: It is the viler perfidy of Christians. To see such crouds of the faithful flock to-day from every part to Church, to celebrate with palms and prayers the solemn triumph of my JESUS: To see such multitudes devoutly thronging to the sanctuary to praise and sing his praises with pious, public, loud *Hosanna's*. To see them piously employ'd, not in idly throwing their garments in his way, but adorning the blest *Jerusalem* of their contrite hearts with the rich habits of grace and fervent charity, to give him a fit reception in the Holy Eucharist: To see, I say, so many yield-up their breasts to him a voluntary conquest, and grace his victorious entry with cries of love of hope, and penitential grief: O the extatic pleasure! O how would my soul be this day ravish'd at the reversion of the annual scene; could I but cherish any solid hopes of it's duration! But when I reflect, how many of this fickle croud of praying, vowing, penitent, communicating Christians shall, just as they did last year and many years before, renew in their excesses, before next Friday comes, all the indignant outrages which Jesus suffer'd in his passion; my spirits sink, my blood runs languid, and I have no heart to mingle in the rejoicings of the day. "And will this be the case, you'll say?" Ah! And will it not, I say? Hitherto every revolving year has seen you on *Palm Sunday* devoutly triumphing with your Saviour, and has it not also seen you, ere the week was half-elaps'd, repenting of your compunction, (and to do penance for the pious deed) joining his enemies, with fresh ingratitude, to load that Saviour with outrageous injuries? Ah! What wrong then do I do you, in suspecting that your present *Paschal* piety will not last? O inconsistency! Shocking inconsistency of Christians! Where shall I find words to give a true idea of it's horror? O inconsistent Christians! can you applaud yourselves for an ungrateful levity, which you look down upon with so much indignation and contempt in the perfidious Jews: Whose want of steadiness was (notwithstanding) downright constancy compared with yours? O! tremble rather, lest, outstripping them in perfidy, you should surpass them also in the punishment. Reflect, if you have never yet reflected, that *INCONSTANCY IN GOOD IS ONE OF THE EVILS WE HAVE MOST CAUSE TO DREAD*.

I. Because it is mingled in our very nature with our general corruption, and therefore requires our utmost vigilance to expel it from our souls; and

II. Because

II. Because it is the chief cause of damnation to Christians, as it was of ruin to the Jews.

"O God, thou fountain of invariable mercy! Look down upon these frail, these fickle souls of ours, and fix them with confirming grace in the pursuit of good. O! let them not, like unresisting rushes, waver and bend this way and that at the discretion of every wind which blows: But make them, like solid rocks, immovable amidst the roughest tempests of temptations. And since thou has't mercifully made our hearts incapable of rest till they repose in thee; so fill them with thy grace and virtues; and so replenish them with steady faith, firm hope, and growing charity and lasting perseverance, as that they may henceforward know no other change than that of being fill'd with and absorb'd in thy unchanging glory and beatitude."

I. It was not quite wrong in those philosophers, who made mutability or inconstancy enter as a constituent part in the definition of the material world: For whether we fix our eyes to the sublunary creation, or lift them to the spheres; what steadiness shall we find but inconstancy? The earth, the air, the waters, with all things in them are ever uncertain in their motions. The sun, the moon, the stars, with all the planetary system, are ever varying in their places and their course. And if for six-thousand years the learned world has sought in vain the subject of perpetual motion; so might they go on for other six-thousand years (was the world likely to last so long) in search of something perpetually the same, and be at last as much to seek as ever. Yet this may be accounted for: All matter is in it's nature perishable; and therefore it is no wonder, that, under the controul of general waste, it should incessantly corrupt and never keep one sameness even in two neighbouring instants. But that a spiritual being, by nature incorruptible, unsubject to the laws of change and local motion, should be unsteady! That man's immortal Soul created to fix itself unalterably in it's unchangeable Creator, should, spite of nature, be inconstant! O! This is a prodigy which equally deserves our wonder and our grief. And yet, O Christians, so it is. So miserably are these noble spirits, since Adam's fall, plunged in the mire of original corruption, so strongly are they attach'd to, so thickly crusted over with, the concupiscences of the flesh; that they, who were form'd like seraphims to rest in God unchanged unchangeable, are now like crawling insects clogg'd with earth, and slaves to all the inconstant motions of their ever-changing passions. Even the hearts of the apostles were not proof against inconstancy. Tho', like unshaken rocks, he pick'd

them out to build on their solidity the never-changing structure of his Holy Church; how were they not, like weightless feathers, tost by every puff of trial? Judas, even Judas among the rest, was chosen by him to illuminate the world, like an unextinguishable planet. "Was not the very traitor Judas spoken to as well as any of the rest of the apostles when JESUS told him: *Ye are the light of the world.*" And did not the devil put-out that light, says St. Ambrose? Yes, yes: He did, O Holy Father! Yes, yes: He did, O Christians! The devil perverted Judas, that splendid apostolic light of faith and charity, that advocate of Christ's substitutes the poor; and changed him to a smoky lightless mass of treachery against Christ's sacred person. But then what devil was it, who wrought the horrid change? Not Beelzebub had so much part in it as he-himself: His own inconstancy was his worst devil. But this is no wonder: He was the son of perdition; his charity was hypocrisy, his hope was avarice, his faith apostasy. What better then could be expected from that poisonous weed; *Do men gather grapes off thorns.* †

Not so St. John, the loved disciple. He, all fire of seraphic love for JESUS, could never rest without him; could taste no joy but with him, could not even relish the bread of angels, but reclined on JESUS's breast, to suck-in, with the heavenly food of JESUS's body, the ecstatic wisdom of his sacred truths. And yet (O unsteady heart of Man!) no sooner danger threatens his JESUS, than John betakes himself to flight; and he, who seem'd before to quit almost his flesh to cling to his beloved Master, now leaves behind him in the hands of the Jews his linen robe to flee from his all-loving master left to the discretion of a furious rabble. The constancy of John then, with all his ardor and sincerity of love for Christ, was conquer'd by his fears. But ah! Who would have thought, by the courage of a St. Thomas, that any fear could shake his faith? While JESUS is in safety, we hear not many words from him: Content to give his dear-loved Saviour proofs of his inviolable attachment to his sacred Person in an unwearied zealous silent watching of his blessed will, he stifles all unnecessary expressions of his love for him; not doubting but that JESUS knew his faithful heart. But JESUS no sooner talks of death than the heroic Thomas intrepidly prepares to share with his honour'd Master as well in the worst as in the best of his fate; and generously cries-out, to animate his brethren to the same noble resolution: *Let us also go and die with him.* † O generous happy hero! What then has't thou henceforth to fear, for whom even death has lost it's terrors? What can ere shake thy faith so

* St. Matthew. † St. Mark. vii. † St. John xii. resolutely

resolutely guarded by a love which thus has proved itself *as strong as death*? * But what, *did I say*? Alas! Inconstancy thou has't still to fear: Still does there stick some earthly mire to thy generous soul. Still will that struggle to weigh thy noble spirit down and shake it's firmness: Still if thou do'st not narrowly watch-over it's corrupt propensity; it shall in earnest conquer that hitherto unconquerable faith: And what the fears of death could not, inconstancy of life shall do. It was even so: *Thomas*, who fear'd not to die with his Lord while passible, fear'd to believe in his Lord when become impassible, till Jesus urged him to it with conviction: *Unless I see, I will not believe.* † O dire inconstancy! What can'st thou not subvert?

But what shall we say to a *St. Peter*, that main, that fundamental stone of faith on which Christ built his Church? Who does not know, how firmly he profess'd his Lord to be the Son of God? In recompence for which Christ previously enroll'd him in the list of Saints? *Blessed art thou Simon Bar Jona*: *because flesh and blood has not revealed this to thee.* ‡ Ah! What then, O heaven-inspired Confessor, what can ere shake thy sanctity henceforth, who, thus conversant with thy God, has't broken-off all parley with the flesh and has't been canoniz'd by Christ himself, by the Sovereign Lord of Saints? But what (*do I ask again?*) what has't thou to fear? Why — thy own flesh: Some particles of that flesh still closely cling to thee: And whilst thou has't yet flesh about thee, thou has't still to fear. The laws of the flesh are fickleness and change: These laws within thy members will be for ever struggling against the laws of thy mind, against thy steadiness of soul: And therefore if thou keepest not a narrow watch over them to subdue them; they will be conquerors soon or late and render thee inconstant. In fact, beloved Christians, this zealous apostle, who scorn'd, one time, to parley or deliberate with flesh and blood in the confession of his Lord's divinity, soon falls a dupe to the arguments of flesh, and tries to divert the Saviour of the world from being such, by aiming to dissuade him from his cross and the redemption of mankind: *Far be this from thee, Lord: this shall not be to thee.* § Inasmuch that our Redeemer thought himself under a necessity of as publicly reproving him as he had before approved him; and, treating this basis of his Church as a corner stone of scandal, chased him from his presence with these indignant words: *Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a scandal to me.* || O fatal fickleness of man's corrupted nature! O dangerous inconstancy! "See then, says the surprized *St. Augustin*, behold, how the souls of the disciples fluctuated with in-

* *Cantic. viii.* † *St. John. xx.* ‡ *St. Matth. xvi.* § *Ibid.* || *St. Matth. xvi.*

"constancy; now firmly upright, now sapinely fallen; one while all light, another while all darkness and obscurity."

And is not this inconstancy, beloved audience, by far more glaringly remarkable in us? One time all fervor, all light, all spirit, how do we mount on wings of prayer, like eagles to the very heavens? Another-time how do we not, like moles, all languor, all blindness, all-over flesh, sink in the earth almost to hell itself? To-day, perhaps our hearts are firmly closed to vice, as pores of the impenetrable adamant. And yet, perhaps, to-morrow, if not ere the morrow comes, no wax yields readier to the melting sun than we shall to every the slenderest temptation: While in the mean time, the grace and Christian virtues, we were before possess of, serve but as ignoble foot-stools for guilt and passion to mount the throne of tyranny and riot in disorder.

"But where, *you'll say*, is the wonder, that we poor worldlings should be thus wavering in good, when even the exalted souls of Christ's peculiar favorites were not exempt from feeling the same effects of human imbecility?" Ah! wonder, I own, there is no room for, Christians: Rather is this a plain irrefragable argument of what I first advanced, that inconstancy is mingled with the corruption of human nature in us all, and therefore is it one of those evils we ought the most to dread, as one, which we stand in need of all our vigilance to escape. For if the noblest firmest souls, those chosen souls who were singled-out to be examples and dispensers of every good to us, were yet, for want of a perpetual vigilance and fortitude, surpris'd into it, by the still lurking seeds of fleshly frailty remaining in them; alas what cause of confidence have we poor sinful creatures, crusted all-over with flesh and fleshly inclinations. Rather have not we double reason to stand awake for-ever on our guard, or, even sleeping, to rest upon our arms; and once we have embraced the good, to cling so closely to it, as that nor earth nor aught of earthly may be able to unlink us from it? That all mankind are frail and wavering by nature then is not disputed: But then take this along with you, that publick common frailty is but a lame excuse for private fickleness in Christians endowed with grace to keep them steady. And though, by the few examples I have quoted, 'tis plain that the noblest holiest souls, without incessant watching, are liable to be betray'd by their intestine weakness into inconstancy in good; yet are there many glorious instances to be produced of persons as frail by nature as delicate of composition, as the weakest of us all, who have given illustrious proofs, how unconquerably constant in goodness unwearied vigilance can make the heart of man.

What if I should shew you an *Eleazar*, a man stricken

stricken in age, reduced to the dilemma of either losing his constancy or losing his life. Doubtless you will own, that his years, his labours and infirmities might not a little contribute to weaken his mind and therefore to shake his resolution in sight of such a trial. Yes, doubtless it would have done so but that his vigilance was ever awake to support him. Compelled therefore under pain of the severest tortures to eat of certain meats forbidden by the Almighty's laws, what does he resolve? Why—spite of all the delicacy of his aged frame, with more than youthful vigour, he made the glorious choice of constancy, and went, says the sacred historian, * *went voluntary to the punishment. And considering how he ought to come patiently sustaining, he determin'd not to do unlawful things for the love of life.* O glorious vigilance! O noble effect of serious thought! Eleazar then with all his delicacy, with all his weaknesses of flesh and frailty of an age decay'd, was arm'd by vigilance for victory and bravely gain'd it; *sustain'd indeed sore pains of body, but according to the soul, suffered them willingly; and in this manner bravely departed this life, leaving not only to young men, but even to the whole nation the memory of his death for an example of virtue and fortitude.* † What if I should shew you seven Jewish brethren successively tormented even to death, in sight of one-another, for the cause of constancy in a like conjuncture: Or shew you their heroic mother sacrificing seven lives in theirs, all dearer, all more precious, than her own, and finally concluding amidst the greatest tortures the generous sacrifice with her own life; purely to cling inseparably to good? There is then no age, no sex, no tenderness of frailty, but grace improved by vigilance may overcome. But why should I recur to Jewish times for instances of fortitude and vigilance, to inculcate Christian constancy to Christian auditors? Why, Christians? Ah! It is to pique your wariness. If Jews yet unredeem'd by the death of Jesus, yet unfortified by his blood, untaught by his example, could by their watchfulness attain to conquer nature and maintain their constancy in good, unshaken amidst such fiery trials; what shame will it not be for you to plead your frailty in excuse for your fantastical unsteadiness on every slight attack? Have then the birth and life and sufferings, and death and doctrines, and example of your Saviour render'd your frailty greater than it was before? Or is not human nature render'd now omnipotent in him, who died to renew and strengthen it with his grace? How else did a St. Stephen, like an impenetrable rock, resist immovable amidst a shower of stones in his fidelity to Christ? The stones indeed had force enough to break his limbs, but still his constancy remain'd invulnerable, unshaken.

* 2 Macca. vi.

† *Ibid.*

How else did'st thou, O glorious martyr, *Bar-lam*, with more than human intrepidity, pull-down the pride of tyranny, thy-self unmov'd? This dauntless champion of JESUS CHRIST, dragg'd to the altar of an idol, is there commanded to offer incense, "I offer incense, *cries the generous hero?* No, no: "Thou art mistaken, tyrant. I am a Christian, "and therefore rather chuse to sacrifice my flesh "to Jesus than incense to thy idols. And to convince thee that I am quite in earnest, see how "much readier this hand can burn for Christ than "hold a thuribule to Satan." This said, he bravely thrusts his sacred hand into a fire prepared for a more ignoble purpose. There he persists in holding it and turns it often round amidst the flames with the same ease of countenance as one would do who was but strowing flowers. Already is the skin burnt off by the intensity of heat; still he remains unmoved: The flesh broils down in fiery drops; and still he with-draws it not; the spasm quite penetrates to his very marrow, through the parch'd sinews, nerves and arteries, and bones; and still he flinches not: But while the shrinking standers-by, with horror, turn their eyes away from the painful spectacle, He serenely looks at the consuming victim; smiles on his torture, and enjoys the smart. But yet that he may not altogether seem a lifeless statue, big tears of anguish trickling down his cheeks, betray the acuteness of his pains and leave his torturers convinced, that it is not insensibility of body but constancy of soul which renders him thus immovable. Ah! his flesh is but too sensible of the rude anguish and would readily draw back, but that his spirit bids it not; "Enough, "enough," *his languid sense cries out.* "There "is not yet enough endured for Christ," *replies his vigorous spirit.* "No more, no more: For "pity's sake no more," *the fainting flesh cries out.* "Tis a mistake, *cries constancy:* "Much more "is possible; much more is tolerable, for Christ: "I can all things in him who comforts me." * *replies the generous hero.* Nor does he draw his precious hand from amidst the burning coals, till he sees the very bones quite stript of every particle of flesh. "O hand of constancy, *says great St. Basil,* "untaught by fire to yield! O feeble fire thus "taught by flesh to be overcome! What shall I "call thee, noble soldier? An invulnerable statue? "No: Thy fortitude surpasses the robustest adamant a statue can be form'd of: Shall I compare thee then to steel? Ah! No: The saint "similitude is far beneath thy constancy, whom "fire could consume but not subdue." † O sacred hero, let me subjoin! O sacred hero! destin'd to sign the condemnation of inconstant souls! What coals of fire will not thy firmness sing in the face of those unsteady Christians, whose virtue yields to every

* *Philipp. xiv.*

every

every little spark of concupiscence? What an immortal instance of reproach wil't not thou prove to the fickle Christians of this age, who, bent by every trivial trial, abandon Christ, forsake their virtue, give-up grace and offer incense to every idol of their passions and caprices; and after all, expect to stand excused by pleading the common frailty of human nature.

Go then, O Christians! Be constant in nothing but inconstancy: And see at last whether the frailty of the flesh by nature prone to change will be admitted as a legitimate excuse for your unsteadiness in good. See whether even your own past constancy in evil will not rather rise in judgment against you. Man then can, in spite of all this volubility of nature, be firm in evil? Ah! Yes, yes: He can. Too evidently we have seen he can; of this we have had innumerable proofs: Innumerable instances of men who have endured the greatest hardships, encounter'd the most dread dangers, and borne the most cruel tortures, rather than shrink at vices once embraced: And we may truly say, that, if Christ has had many martyrs, the devil has probably had many more. O horror! Shall man have steadiness enough to date the rudest trials inflexible in vice, and yet plead fickleness of nature as an excuse for yielding-up his virtue to the feeble force of every paltry temptation? Upon this subject we are obliged to *Plutarch*, for a very moral though melancholy reflection, which I'll relate if you will pardon me the giving you, who are Christians, a lesson out of an instructive *Heathen*. But pardon me, *did I say?* Why should you not? It is not I who affront you? But you affront yourselves, if you don't practice better than mere *Heathens* think. To return then; "When *Agésilas*, says this author, had beheld a certain flagitious criminal, whom he had caused to be put to the torture, persist in his perversity with superlative constancy amidst the acutest anguish, and bear every torment with magnanimous steadiness; he could not forbear crying-out with painful surprise: O what a wretch is man, to place such constancy in what is base and wicked! It grieved the illustrious chief to see such strength of mind and steadiness of nature lost in wickedness, which, if directed rightly, might have proved of sovereign service to the common-wealth." Ah Christians! There is then a strength, a steadiness in nature, however weak we find it? Yes, nature is not so feeble or so fickle, but we can steadily persist in evil: And therefore would we but exert our vigilance? we might apply that strength and firmness to the keeping us as immovable in good. What wretches then, O Christians, must not we be if we compel not nature, frail and wavering as it is, to be as vigorous and firm in virtue as it is capable of being in vice?

I own indeed, that our corrupted nature is much more prone to evil than to good. And therefore it must require abundantly more careful watching to fix it steadily to good, than would be necessary to make it firm to evil. But if unwearied watching will effect it; must not inconstancy in good be an unpardonable crime? I own, the Christians are but few, who keep their virtue on this perpetual guard: And therefore is it that the frailty of their wavering nature has shaken, nay defeated, the constancy of so many of them hitherto. But, some, you see, as frail, as weak, as naturally prone to sin, as the most feeble of you all, have kept so faithful a look-out as to be proof against inconstancy, amidst the most staggering temptations: And so may all. But what, if all had been inconstant? What tho' the apostles were unsteady; what though we could not furnish one plain instance of heroic constancy in good; would that be any plea for you hereafter to relinquish the virtuous state you have now embraced? No, Christians, no. Our common frailty is no excuse for our private sins. Believe me: Our frailty, our unsteadiness is no excuse for our neglect of cultivating with assiduous care, those graces which are offer'd us to make us strong and steady. If frailty could excuse us; why should that God, who is so tender of us, bear such avenging hatred to every fall of these poor miserable vessels of frail earth? He wanted not *Job* to remind him, *Remember, that like clay, thou did'st make me.* * He knows full well how frail our vessels are by nature: But then he knows likewise how strong he has put it in our power, by grace, to make them. And therefore when they are broken, he knows that is not their frailty's fault but our perversity's. And therefore too, when they are broken, he rejects them; and gives them up to *Satan* to rest them for his hideous use in the eternal flames. "Away, says the Almighty, away with these frail vessels, which break at every touch, though made by grace so strong. Let them be ever banish'd from my presence, nor ever be admitted to the altar of my glory. Let me no more behold these fickle creatures, who cost me so much blood to comfort with my grace and render firm to me. To-day devout; to-morrow perhaps scandalous: To-day all chastity; to-morrow all uncleanness: This week at Church; the next perhaps in some unhallow'd stew: This week so fervent in their vows that their pious bosoms are so many vessels of fragrant aromatics; the next so tepid, so indifferent, so faithless to their purposes, that their hearts seem so many sewers of exhaling filth: This Easter-Time so careful of their words, that every breath they utter ascends to me like incense; but after Easter so

* *Job x.*

"abandon'd"

“abandon’d to lies, to perjuries, to flattery, to calumny and leudness, that their mouths scent far more odious than a pest-ground newly open’d. Away, away with such unsteady vessels from my presence: Away with them to the infernal flames, where they are fitter to be burnt, than to adorn the temple of my glory.” O vessels of reprobation! O inconstant souls! O that one of you was but by to hear me, that I might try to save you from that unconsuming furnace! How should I not rejoice? O wavering souls! O souls unfaithful to your sovereign, to your gracious spouse, and to your God! What can you propose to reap from these virtuous beginnings without an end alike? What from this semi-goodness half unfinish’d? What from this race begun; unless you reach the goal? What, in a word, from all the grace and lights you now possess; if once you barter them for inconstancy? Ah! What can you reap but reprobation, eternal reprobation? For *He only, who shall persevere to the end, will be saved*: So true is that import remark of St. *Jerom*: “’Tis not the beginning of Christians but their end which is inquired into. St. *Paul* began amiss; but ended happily: Whereas *Judas* began laudably; but merited damnation by his end.” O Christians! Be steady in your perseverance to the end; or your present virtuous beginnings will be utterly fruitless. And if you were made strong enough to begin; what room have you to doubt but, he who gave you that strength, if you are watchful to improve it, will make you steady to the end? “Our flesh is frail, *you still cry-out*; and our very nature is mingled with inconstancy.” The greater evil then, *I say*, is inconstancy, and so much the more to be dreaded for it’s being an intestine traitor lurking within us. Surely then the more you have to fear from it, the more cause have you to be for ever on your guard against it, and the less will you be capable of excuse or pity, if you do not redouble your vigilance to conquer it.

II. But inconstancy is not only to be dreaded as a lurking enemy within us, holding correspondence with our corruption. It is also to be dreaded as an incendiary of enmity between God and us. It caused the Almighty to abandon his favorite people the *Jews*, and to devote them to ruin; and is capable, if we are conquer’d by it, of banishing us forever from his enlivening presence, and plunging us into irrevocable perdition. Who, to hear the pious acclamations of the *Jews* in the solemn triumph of Jesus on this sacred day, would not be disposed, with holy zeal, to envy their fervor? *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord*, they cry. What devotion! What attachment to the sacred person of Christ could inspire a more affectionate salutation. But! Wait a few days; how horrid a note shall not

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this change to? *Crucify, crucify him*; they cry. Heavens! What! *crucify the Blessed who comes in the name of the Lord*? O blasphemous project! No matter; *crucify him*; let him be crucified, is to be the popular cry, O the horrid fickleness of this stiff-neck’d people! Shockt at such strange unparallel’d inconstancy, a holy Father astonish’d cries: “What then shall this persecuted person do to you?” “What new thing shall happen, that the voice of blessing and praises should be so soon, so suddenly reversed to shrieks of blasphemy and spleen?” Alr! What indeed can be the subject of your quarrel with him, O senseless waverers? To-day, all fervor, you are eager to embalm his very name to immortality with your encomiums. And for what reason will you then, in a few days, vomit from your mouths the poison of your blasphemies against him to destroy him? Why must you even, like basilisks, level at him rank deadly venom from your murderous looks? But why did I ask? Were not these murderers of Christ the lineal race of those ungovernable *Jews* whom *Moses* headed in the wilderness? It is nothing new, then to see this people either ungrateful or inconstant; whose loyalty and faith consisted ever in scarce remaining one whole week in perfect love, subjection and fealty with God. “This, this *says the Father*, is the true antiquated malice of that people.” Why, think you, does the Almighty now keep the wretched nation of *Jews* exiled from his holy Church, repudiated from Christian altars, but because they have ever proved themselves fickle vessels unfit for his service?

If you are not convinced of this, look-back and believe your own eyes: Behold them but in the *Red-Sea*, where the weaker elements subsiding to make their fortitude a free passage, the unsteady waters harden into the firmest walls to serve at once for bulwarks to their safety, and emblems of their constancy: How joyfully, how thankfully, how intrepidly do they not steer their new-form’d course amidst the embattled waves, and charm the foaming surges to eccho to their fervent songs of praise and benediction of the God of Hosts, singing with rapturous melody like that of *David*: * *The rivers, O Lord, have lifted up their waves above the voices of many waters. The surges of the sea are marvelous: Marvelous is our Lord on high. . . Holiness becometh thy house, O Lord, for length of days.* O what vessels of steadiness! O what devout, what fervorous vessels of faithful constancy, thus prepared to persevere to an endless length of days! But hold, there is no trusting to the hollow sounds of such frail, such crazy fickle vessels. Scarce are they safely encamp’d, in the wilderness, than they begin to break into inconstancy, and murmur with base ingratitude against their deliverer. A little scarcity

* Psalm xcii.

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of

of food assails them and there needs no more to make them lose all respect for *Moses*, all confidence in God's future providence, all gratitude for his past mercies: "Ah! What fools were not we, *They cry*, to leave the land of *Egypt*, the land of plenty for this barren desert? *Would to God*, we had died by the hand of our Lord in the land of *Egypt*, when we sat over the flesh-pots, and did eat bread to our fill! Why have you brought us into this Desert, that you might kill all the multitude with famine? * Can God, think you, prepare a table in the desert. † In *Egypt* it is true, we lived a life of slaves: But what was that to our present misery, reduced as we are likely to be through hunger to die the death of beasts?" What can be said to such ingratitude? God nevertheless to conquer their perversity with goodness, converts the heavens into a store-house of provisions, makes plenty descend to them in a shower of *Manna*, and stops their mouths to murmuration by filling them to satiety with heavenly nouriture. In short, *They eat and had their fill*. Just for a spurt indeed, while yet the food is in their mouths, this miracle of providence revives their faith, and rekindles their fervor. But ah! How long does either last? Even till a fresh occasion calls on them for steadiness. Ah! hear how a little penury of water tries these tender vessels again, and makes them echo nought but ungrateful reproaches against their leader and against their God. "Alas what is dry meat without refreshing draughts to cool and moisten our parch'd-up entrails? Supplying us with viands without the least supply of drink, is only making our pain more lingering to make us doubly feel the death of perishing through thirst: Why, why then didst thou O *Moses* give ear to the Almighty's invitation of us to the Land of Promise? Why didst thou make us go forth from *Egypt* to kill us and our children, and our beasts with thirst? ‡ O volatile race of faithless people! And cannot the same God, who harden'd the floods of the sea into a solid rock for thy deliverance and safety, force also rivers from a barren flint? What then is thy confidence in God; that a little sudden thirst is thus capable of making thee utterly forget the immense sea of God's ever-flowing mercy and liberality to thee? But why do I ask? It is the nature of this inconstant generation; and the best excuse which could ever yet be made for them, is that of *St. Laurence Justinian*, who pleads their habitual perversity as the cause of their several acts of inconstancy to God from time to time. "Such, such is true antiquated malice of this people," to receive favours from God, to thank him, to make him promises, and then to forget his favours and rebel against him. But after all these benefits, surely

* *Exodus* xvi. † *Psalms* lxxvii. ‡ *Exodus* xxxvii.

God may expect a little more fidelity and gratitude from this people, than he has yet met with? Surely, O head-strong *Israelites*, you will be forced at last to yield? What can you wish for more? He has furnish'd you with drink at the expence of a miracle, to change your thirst of water into an unquenchable thirst after the living fountain of his love. He fed you and satiated you before, with bread handed down to you from heaven; that, craving no more the perishable substance of the earth, you might learn to hunger chiefly, nay wholly, after the bread of everlasting life. In short, to purchase your love, he has condescended to supply every the meanest office, that you might suffer nothing, want nothing, which you could wish for from him. Surely then, O favour'd nation, you can resist no longer such overflowing liberality? Surely, tho' God should hereafter reduce you to every want; try you with every distress; you could not forbear to love him? —No; It may be, not: It may be, that, just while you are full, you will remember to be grateful. But afterwards? O! Afterwards the cry is: *Who shall give us flesh to eat: Our soul is dry; our eyes behold nothing else but this Manna.* * O what loathing, what nauseating, what revolutions of stomach! Always *Manna*? Always a little insipid cake? O savoury melons and onions of *Egypt*! O the cherishing meals of flesh we were fatten'd and regaled with there! Ah! Why did we leave that abounding land, to be surfeited with tasteless *Manna* in a wilderness? *Who will give us flesh to eat in the Desert?* ** Such, such, beloved Christians, were the returns the Almighty met with from the children of *Israel* for all his mercies to them. Such their gratitude and constancy to their Divine Benefactor. But ah! This had been supportable, if this was all. But this was the least effect of their unsteadiness. This, in a word, was piety, compared with the rest of their conduct: Not content with murmurations against God, not satisfied with complaints of his providence deceiving them, they proceed to the blasphemous arraignment of his deity; set-up a strange God in competition with him; cause a molten calf of gold to be erected for their God; publicly and solemnly renounce their allegiance to their Maker; and turn their homages and adorations to the idol of their own working. O how the desert rings with their impious loud huzzas! No more is their song: *marvelous is our Lord on high*. No, no: It is now: "Long live our golden God, long live the molten calf, which (ere it had a being) freed us from the *Egyptian* tyrant *Pharaoh's* slavish laws. Long live the golden earlets which have form'd us such a God to adore: *These, these, are thy Gods, O Israel, who have brought thee out of the*

* *Numb.* x. † *Numb.* x.

"Land

Land of Egypt. * O flagitious nation! O rebel generation, more inconstant than the moon, more fickle than the air, more volatile than smoke, more unstable than the waves! Away with this infamous nation from the presence of God; Out with it from the pale of Christ's Church; Far with it from his temples, from his altars. "Yes, yes, says the Lord, away with these fickle, frail, unsteady vessels of putrefaction: Away with them from my presence forever, to be forever vessels of perdition. But first let them roam mere vagabonds on earth, proscribed, like Cain; and left, like outlaws; without kingdom; without laws; without temples; without sacrifices; without priesthood, power or honour. And since they needs would live without me their sovereign; let them ever be the scorn of men and the scoff of devils."

But why, my God, why must this whole nation be proscribed for the malice of their fore-fathers? "That indeed was the antiquated malice of this people's first progenitors." But have not their posterity amply wiped-off, this day, with loud Hosannas, the guilty stain of their fore-fathers? Ah No! Wait but a few days; and the harsh cries of *crucify him, crucify him*, will soon convince you, that the antiquated malice of this people's ancestors, is still alive in their posterity. Still, still did they persist in their inconstancy to the last; and therefore just was it, that God should no longer persist in shewing them mercy: Time was it that he should put an end to his long suffering, change his patience, exasperated into fury, and abandon them to the ruinous consequences of their contumacious unsteadiness. O faithless nation! O fatal dupe of inconstancy! O *bad'st thou but known, even in this thy day, the things which would be of peace to thee! But now they are hidden from thy eyes.* † And alas all this day's glorious works will be destroy'd by the perverse unsteadiness of some days hence. Wherefore † *the days shall come upon thee: And thy enemies shall compass thee with a trench, and block thee up all round, and straiten thee on every side; and beat thee flat to the ground and thy children which are in thee; and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation.* O wretched, wretched, wretched people! How dear a price has not your inconstancy cost you?

But while alas I am speaking, an inward check, the gracious impulse of inspiring truth, calls-back my ill-address'd reproaches; and bids me no longer lavish on the Jews these sighs and lamentations; while Christians in general, and some of us (it may be) in this very audience, stand in need of all the tears we have to spare, to weep at-home, and water with incessant grief our own past fickleness. The

* Exodus xxxii. † St. Luke xix. † Ibid.

Jews were inconstant, it is true, shamefully inconstant. But are we Christians a jot more firm in our fidelity to Christ? The good purposes made in former confessions, how soon have they not been broken? The virtuous resolutions taken, this very day, of giving our selves to God intirely, how shortly will they be remember'd by us, only to be the more perversely violated? That fervor in the praises of God (which has been, this day, kindled in the hearts of some of us, I hope by the graciousness of Jesus in coming into them in the holy Eucharist we received) how soon will it not be most shamefully extinguish'd, by a renewal of our disorderly inconstancy? You, O young men, happily convinced of the dangers which your unsteadiness has made you subject to, have at this sacred time perhaps renew'd your baptismal vows, and given yourselves up to God with fervor and sincerity. But ah! A few days hence, what will become of all your present warmth and candour? What will be the fruit of so many holy thoughts which God has infused into you by evangelic sermons, by devout lectures, by spiritual conversations and edifying examples? You, O young men, I say, touch'd with a lively sense of your past follies, are (this day) resolved to give-up to God the remainder of that life which you have so early dedicated to the world? But ah! who will assure me that this day's compunction, like that of this day twelve-months ago, shall not be render'd fruitless by a relapse more vicious than your former state, within the narrow space of a few days-time? You, O young women, re-inflamed with pious ardor by the revival of that inbred devotion, which gracious heaven seems to have mingled in the composition of your female hearts; you, I say, are now resolved to cling, with Mary, to the cross of Christ, and chuse the better part, the part of love. But ah! Will not the approaching Easter see you re-assume all your little vanities and dissipations; if you do not, even ere Good-Friday comes, enter again in league with all your airs and artifices to tempt and bribe some fickle Judas to betray your Lord with crimes, excited by your levity of conduct? You, O Ecclesiastics, fired with that fervor which this sacred season inspires, even like cherubims in the Holy of Holies, infuse, nay force devotion into the hearts of all the people with your exemplary deportment at God's altars: But ah! What will it avail, if, a few days elapsed, forgetful of your dignity, you should approach those very altars with a levity unseemly even in the laity? You, O gentry, are actually all zeal, all eagerness to ransom your offences with prayer, and fasts, and almsdeeds. Ah! Have a care you be not soon as eager to repeat those offences, with spiritual sloth, with luxury, with injustices? O Poor! O Sick! O Friendless! How humble are not you at present?

B b 2

How

How penitent? How ready to receive the comforts of your Lord? But will you always be thus ready? Ah! How probably will not a little prosperity, a little health, a little human respect, soon make you as haughty as ever; as disorderly as ever; as indifferent as ever, to the things which truly pertain to your peace? O would to GOD I had less ground for all my fears of your inconstancy, dear Christians, than I really have. But alas when I consider the scandals given, within this one last year by many Christians, who, but a year ago, were lovely patterns of a Christian life: When I consider the wealth which within this year has been lavish'd in gaming, in luxury, in debaucheries, in tempting to seduce unguarded innocence; and lavish'd by Christians, by Catholics, by those very persons, who, but last *Lent*, seem'd resolutely bent on devoting their superfluities to the instructing the ignorant, to the feeding the hungry and relieving the necessitous; to the adorning GOD's altars, and encouraging his hospitals, to the placing innocence out of danger, and dragging sinners out of perdition: When, *I say*, I think on all this; how can I forbear to tremble, Christians, lest you should prove as inconstant this year as the last; lest, for want of more steadiness than has been hitherto made use of, penitents should lose their present grace, and lose it for ever; lest the Church should lose it's new born children, GOD be robb'd of his glory, and the devil be released from his confusion? The *Jews*, beloved auditors, appear to you inexcusably flagitious in their inconstancy. And with good reason indeed, for they are so. But ah! How much more, and more inexcusably, flagitious must not those Christians be, who indulged by the Almighty infinitely more than the *Jews*, are still more unfaithful to him, and more unsteady in his service? If the children of *Israel* forsook their Creator to pay their homages to a golden calf; how many children of Christ abandon their Redeemer to idolize the objects of their avarice? If the *Hebrews* rebell'd against GOD to glut themselves with the flesh-pots of *Egypt*; how often do not Christians revolt against him to immerge themselves in every vicious delight of carnality? The *Jews* murmur'd against GOD and his minister *Moses*: And so do Christians. Forever are they busied in murmuring, back-biting, slandering, censuring, calumniating, defaming, or ridiculing his servants their neighbours. On every slight occasion are they practising the like against his ministers their lawful pastors, notwithstanding his terrible menace by the mouth of his prophet; * *The face of our Lord hath divided them: He will not add to respect them; because they have not revered the faces of the priests, neither had they pity on the ancients.* Nay GOD himself is not ex-

* *Jerem. Lament. iv.*

empt from their irreverences. Every little delay of his to gratify them, every little disappointment which for their good he graciously sends them, is a sufficient matter to make them murmur at his disposal, arraign his providence, repine at his government, wish themselves dead to be released from it, and cry-out with the ungrateful *Jews*: *Would we had died by the hand of our Lord, while we sat over the flesh-pots of luxury and did eat the bread of prosperity to our fill:* Nay it is more than enough oftentimes to make them throw-off their dependance on him even to worship the foreign Gods of the earth and the flesh. Ah! Let us then no longer exert our indignation against the *Jews*, which may with so much greater reason be levell'd at ourselves. "This was indeed the antiquated malice of that people." But now alas the impious synagogue stands countenanced by the more heinous impiety of Christians, and we have cause with bleeding hearts to own, that *Such is the modern malice of this more favour'd people.*

O Christians then! inconstant fickle Christians! If this be sadly true, why should false tenderness be so cruel to conceal it? If you are like to prove again inconstant like the *Jews*; why may I not, without offence, warn you, that you will perish with them? Yes, beloved: If after so many merciful reconciliations which your GOD has granted to you; if after so many perverse relapses, you stumble again with the *Jews*; you will probably fall with the *Jews* into irreparable ruin: And the terrifying sentence of *JESUS* upon them, shall be spiritually verified in you: O *Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who killest the prophets and stonest them who were sent to thee! How often would I have gather'd together thy children, as the hen doth gather together her chickens under her wings: and thou wouldst not. Behold your house shall be left desert to you.*"

O faithless city! O faithless Christian metropolis, which persecutest thy lawful pastors and stonest with hatred and calumny those who are lawfully sent to thee by Me and my Church, to lead thee back to me! What miracles have I not wrought to convince thee of thy errors? What mercies have I not exerted to convert thee to truth and good? *And thou wouldst not.* O faith-professing flock of mine! How often have not I, with fresh repeated graces, lights and sacraments and sacred means, tenderly endeavour'd to gather you together from the general contagion, just as the hen gathers together her chickens under her wings; and thou wouldst not. Wherefore behold your house shall be left desert to you: And in punishment of your perverse inconstancy, O fickle Christians, behold your hearts shall henceforth remain, like barren heaths, void of mercy, grace and glory; the

"abandon'd"

"abandon'd waste of sin; the seat of everlasting horror."

Little will it avail to plead the frailty of your nature mingled (as it was) with inbred fickleness. Prone as your nature of itself may be to levity, that levity has been sufficiently fix'd and render'd firm by the precious blood of him, who gave even to the fickle winds their weight. "God, says St. Gregory, has given sufficient gravity to our souls to preserve them against being hurried away from the Almighty's gracious purposes, by their natural levity." What though our hearts, like giddy cock-boats, are liable, when left to themselves, to the being tost and re-tost by every tempestuous hurricane of our passions; is it not our own fault that these vessels, frail as they there, are so unsteady, so often overfet? If you are not resolved on perishing, says St. Bernard, you need not perish. Since God is ever graciously prepared to pilot you himself to everlasting safety. "The word of God will direct you, and the Spirit of God is ready to bear you steady to the harbour of Salvation." But the mischief is, that you snatch the helm out of the Almighty's hands to give it up to caprice: And, instead of eagerly and steadily steering your course towards Heaven, you are courting the flattering gales of sensual pleasures, casting anchor amidst the most trifling amusements, and, fishing for the most empty impertinencies. Thus do you foolishly lose your time, and split at last on the rock of temporal enjoyments. It is not then so much the fault of your frailty which makes you thus faithless, thus inconstant in good, as it is your perverse neglect of vigilance. You are frail by nature? You are of a composition mingled with inconstancy? And were not a St. Stephen, a St. Barlam, as fickle by nature as any of you all? Yet flint could not conquer the firmness of the former, nor fire subdue the constancy of the latter. And why may not you be as constant as they were; you, who have all the helps they had? But how should you, while you neglect to watch, as they did, over your native frailty? How shall those Christians ever bear the rude assaults, which these great saints so easily repell'd, who are not sufficiently on their guard to bear the most trifling provocations? How shall the hand give up it's flesh to flames, it's body to a volley of stones, for Christ, which cannot give an alms to his poor, cannot give pardon to an offending neighbour? How shall that hand strip itself of it's own flesh for Christ, which is too lascivious to abstain from the flesh of others?

Let us place before the eyes of our understanding, beloved, all the flames of various vices which have too often separated us from Christ, and see whether they were so intense, so terrifying to resist, as those which his glorious martyrs have constantly not only

resisted but overcome. Ah! have we been, like St. Stephen, like a St. Bartholomew, like a St. Barlam, surrounded with executioners, slay'd alive by butchers, tortured with flames, threaten'd a thousand deaths by tyrants? No, no: The trivial spark of a leud look, of a wanton suggestion, of a lascivious message, has fired our souls almost to ashes, and dragg'd us from the bosom of Christ to the jaws of Satan. The almost imperceptible spark of an unwary word, of an affront, of an ill-grounded jealousy, has arm'd the hands of Christians with sword and pistol, has fill'd their mouths with reproaches and calumny, and loaded their hearts with the venom of rancour, hatred, and thirst of revenge. By what then, Christians, do you know that your nature is so weak as you imagin it! What crosses have you courted, to exercise your constancy? What invitations have you rejected, rather than descend from rather than not cling to, the little crosses sent you for a trial of your constancy? Have you, with a St. Andrew, been, each, much more afraid of losing than of clinging to your cross?

But why do I stop at rivulets, when in sight of the fountain-head of constancy? O my ever dear Redeemer! How much more cruel and grievous was not thy cross than any we can ere be subject to? Yet didst thou never flinch from it. Ah! What a rude temptation was not made use of to shake thy constancy, when dying on it for mankind in general in quality of universal Saviour of mankind? "If thou art the Son of God, the impious Jews cry-out; descend from the cross and we will believe in thee. If thou really art so zealous to save us as thou pretendest; come down from that cross, and we are ready to acknowledge thee for our Messiah." But ah, dear lover and example of firm and faithful souls! Didst thou suffer thyself to be decoy'd from thy beloved cross by such ensnaring arguments? Didst thou screen thyself from shame and reproach, regardless of our wants? Didst thou perchance over-look the love of us, to avoid the imputation of imposture? "No, no, replied thy tender love: I am wedded to this cross, to save my dear-loved souls; and while one single drop of blood remains, within these veins, while this life has the least power left to breathe; suffer I must, agonize I must and will upon this gibbet." But you will be blasphemed. "No Matter." But they will not own you for their God. "Be it so: My beloved elect must and shall be redeem'd. Let the whole price be paid for my friends; and let what will befall my reputation, interests and life; I am ready at the price of every pain to purchase the love of those souls; who, after my example, will be so nail'd in their affections to the cross, that nothing can make them descend from it." And what kind

of blessed souls are those, dear Jesus? Not surely the souls of Christians? Alas, I fear not. Will nothing make them descend from the cross they have once embraced? Mark but the first among them you set eyes on. He receives an affront: But mindful that he is the disciple of a crucified Lord, a Christian, he resolves to cling to his cross and forgive; when the devil, who seldom acts in person, because never at a loss for lawyers to act for him, sets his agents to work: Accordingly they closely press our half-resolved disciple of Christ with the old arguments of their old master. "Alas what are you about? What! Will you put-up with this affront? Will you pass-by this injury? Have you no feeling for your reputation? Why, man! You must prepare to be spit upon, to be insulted, to be trampled on by every insignificant mortal; if you do not teach all men, at the expence of one insolent one, the respect which is due to you: Ah! Away then with this scrupulous tameness and *descend from the cross.*"

This other young lady, call'd by her heavenly spouse, resolves to conquer the world by withdrawing from it, with fruit, for Christ's sake, before it can have time to withdraw from her without benefit. And therefore, even before she can quit it with her body, she renounces it in her mind and heart; despises its enjoyments; and delights only in sacred solitude. But immediately is she besieged by her companions, by her seeming friends, by her relations. "For goodness sake, *they cry*, what means this melancholy humour which has seized you? Who has put this frantic notion in your head? Don't you consider what good you may do in the world? How much comfort and honour you may do your parents? What edification you may give to your companions? The world wants such good creatures as you for examples. Away then with the vapourish thought. You are too young as yet: Have you not variety of pleasures ready to court you? And surely there is no sin in giving a little loofe to lawful pleasures? Do you think, we are not as desirous to be saved as you can be? Come, come, in short: Let us go to-night to the play, to-morrow to a ball, next day to quadrille. There will be time enough some years hence to think on such a dull affair: And, believe me, it requires some years to think maturely on a change of station; especially such a one. Ah! Take our advice then and *descend from the cross.*" Thus from age to age have the devil's solicitors, first Jews, and since Christians, labour'd to separate from the Cross both Christ and his servants.

And you in the mean time, O heartless souls, what are you about? O Christians! Will you, forgetful of your faith, permit yourselves to be seduc-

ed? Shall you listen to the *Devil's* solicitors, yield to a word of satan, and break your word with Christ? Shall you be carried away by ambition, avarice, revenge, and hanker after the flesh-pots of carnal pleasure? Is this imitating his constancy? Is this returning him love for love? O! woe to us; had he not set us the example we are so loth to follow! Had Christ been as willing to part from his cross as we are to be rid of ours; ah! who would have redeem'd us? who would have extinguish'd for us the flames of hell? who would have open'd to us the eternal gates of Heaven? And is our unsteadiness all the return we have to make him? Shall he have embraced an enormous cross, and we evade the trivial cross of an offensive word? Shall he have clung to the cross, in spite of a whole insulting populace: And we be decoy'd away from it, by the solicitations of deluded friends? Look ye, Christians: *Constancy* is the word. Weigh well your obligations, examine your latent forces, correct your inconstancy, and exert your fortitude against all future trials. Be prepared for the worst, and if there should be a necessity, in the cause of constancy in good, to suffer for, or to die with, the Son of God; resolve, like what you are, disciples of Christ, and bravely say each to Jesus with St. Peter, though with greater steadiness, *Lord, with thee I am ready to go into prison and unto death.* You, who, like the Jews, sing *Hosanna*, this day, to the Blessed who cometh in the name of the Lord, have a care that your crimes do not, in their notes, one day, cry-out: *Crucify him, crucify him.* Remember that, if you are frail and wavering by nature, you may be firm and steady by his grace. Remember, that you, who are but too constant in what is evil, are inexcusable if you are not as firm in good. Remember then, that it is not so much to frailty or to fickleness, as to want of care and vigilance, you must impute your eternal perdition. And that, if you relapse, your inconstancy may be the cause of your damnation, Christians; as that of the Jews was of ruin to them. But O! Avert it, gracious God, I earnestly beseech Thee: *In the name, &c.*

Sixth Indiction of the PASSION.

I know not whether or not any of you, Christians, are fond of the diversions of the stage. If you are; I condole with you on the loss you will be at this week on account of the theatres being shut-up, as I presume they will be according to custom. And to repair this loss, as much as is consistent with my function, I invite you all to a very solemn tragedy at this place on next *Good-Friday*. It will not take up three hours of your attention, nor require you to undergo a five or six hours confinement to hear it. But I may venture to promise you, that, with-

out the assistance of any pompous ranting, it will be the deepest, most affecting, and most interesting scene of real distress, you ever yet lent your attention to. I cannot answer, that you will be quite as commodiously seated as you might be at *Covent-Garden*. But there is some difference in the dignity of the place and the importance of the subject, sufficient to make an ample amends: And one considerable advantage you will have here, is, that you will not be so much exposed to colds and many others hazards of body and soul.

You easily perceive, I am talking of the Passion of our Lord and Saviour JESUS CHRIST, which I then intend to preach: In which I shall observe the same method, as is practised in Catholic Countries. I shall not indeed be quite so long as is customary there: And yet Heaven grant, that I may not appear too tedious for the devotion of some! I premise this on purpose, that such delicate Christians as are afraid of sharing too much in the sufferings of their Saviour, even that one day, may either contrive to be absent or previously provide for their ease on that occasion.

Abutteffim, or (as some historians call him) *Abutellim*, king of the *Telusinians*, having incurred the hatred of *Joseph* king of *Fez*, the latter raised a powerful army and marched at the head of it quite to *Telusin*, the seat of *Abutteffim*'s dominions, in order to lay siege to that capital: Not doubting but he should soon become master of it and without much difficulty. But *Abutteffim*, who was no stranger to his attempt, fortified the city, threw himself into it with a strong power and disappointed him. *Joseph* nevertheless, instead of being discouraged by disappointment, made obstinate by opposition, carried on the siege with resolution and vigour: Yet all to no purpose. The besieged monarch with intrepid bravery sustain'd the frequent attacks of the enemy, repulsed them in every assault, and by his wisdom and courage inspired and enabled his subjects to baffle all the efforts of violence, stratagem, and invention to force and surprise the town. Thus persisted these two contending powers in rude dispute, the one trying to over-power or over-reach, the other repelling force and art, with art and force: And victory remaining neuter, fuel'd the furious contest for the uninterrupted space of seven years: When famine at length found a way into the city, which neither the rage nor craft of war could open. A while the brave inhabitants struggled with the intestine foe, and bore the fiercer shocks of hunger, thirst and want of every necessary with a magnanimity worthy of their former conduct: Till finding at last that their spirits as well as strength were wasting as fast as their provisions, and seeing themselves thus likely to be reduced to the dire dilemma of dying by famine or the sword, they be-

gan to suspect their own bravery: Doubting whether it would not be fool-hardiness rather than courage, to dare the cruelty of the former sooner than court the mercy of the latter. Wherefore, urged by a distress which seems void of relief, and not knowing what other counsel to take, they throw themselves unanimously at their beloved monarch's feet, "beseeching him to remember the wounds they have received, the fatigues they have endured, the hardships they have borne and the much they have cheerfully done and suffer'd for, and with him, while there remain'd any hopes that fortune would, sooner or later, favour the justness of his cause: Adding that the constancy of their former efforts might suffice to give his majesty a full proof of their fidelity, zeal, and attachment to his sacred person and interests; and that, if the desperacy of their present condition render'd them incapable of being any longer serviceable to their natural sovereign, neither their courage nor fidelity ought to be question'd for yielding to force, when become the inevitable effect of necessity. Wherefore they hoped their royal master, in consideration of their past services and present impotence, would give them leave to try a better fate in a timely surrender to insolent violence." *Abutteffim* listen'd to their remonstrance with a firmness and serenity becoming the greatness of his soul; and compassionating the depth of their distress without departing from the noble sublimity of his character and sentiments, answer'd them; "That, for his part, he had but one death to meet, and all ways of dying were alike to him, so his virtue expired not before him: That he could not but be sensible of the great sufferings of his subjects since he had all-along borne an equal share of those sufferings with them: And that he was still ready to encounter worse evils for and with them; whose safety he had always consulted without any view to his own interest: That true constancy consists not in bearing many evils, but in being unconquer'd by the worst: That therefore he could by no means consent to their losing the merit of all their past actions, by preferring an infamous life to a glorious death. Wherefore he persuaded them to persist in a noble defence to the last; and, for the rest, to convince them of the perfect disinterestedness of his advice, he exposed his bosom naked to them and declared, that he was ready to devote that flesh to appease the hunger of the least of his subjects." Heroic generosity, worthy of immortal praise!

The generosity however of the *Telusinian* monarch extended no farther than a verbal offer. Yet had it the efficacy to revive the drooping spirits of his people, who resolved, in a sally, which was a-

greed upon for the next day, to follow their sovereign to battle and conquer or die along with him.

O Christians! JESUS not only gave his body to save your souls from want of spiritual nourishment; but really gave it, to be rent and torn and mangled at the mercy of a herd of butchers, to animate you to a virtuous struggle against *Satan* who is laying constant siege to your hearts. Long had the infernal tyrant labour'd to block-up human nature in this world from every heavenly succour; and gall'd and harass'd it with frequent rude assaults and crafty stratagems to over-power it with violence or over-reach it with base artifice. But our eternal Sovereign and Saviour, who generously (with the strong power of his numerous graces) threw himself into the world, by taking human flesh, undertook the world's defence; fought both for and with mankind against their common enemy for three and thirty years; and finally, to shew his liberal disinterested love for man, kindly gave-up his blessed body to be crucified for man; that, fed and fortified with his precious flesh, man might more earnestly persist in combating the envious fiend, and never suffer his constancy and fortitude to be worried or worne-out by any of the serpent's teasing violences or deluding artifices. But ah! What good effects has all this generosity yet wrought in you? Has it yet prevail'd to make you steady in the cause of virtue? Has it yet fired you with resolution to die or conquer sin, which cost your GOD and Saviour so much flesh and blood to oppose the progress of?

Had *Abuttesim*, as he proffer'd, given his body to the butchers to be cut in pieces for the nourishment of his famish'd subjects, and some ingenious poet had wrought the melancholy story into tragic drama; how would not every-one of you, if present at the acting of it, have melted at the bloody scene and bathed the stage with unextorted tears of liquid sympathy? How would not you, seized with a noble sense of pity and revenge, wish him again alive; that you might die or conquer in the cause of such a generous prince? And shall JESUS have been really butcher'd for your sakes; yet you remain insensible? Yet you not be disposed to make one effort to resist the slightest trial for his sake; but leave his standard to surrender at the very first approach of a temptation? Ah! To what purpose then has JESUS left to you his sacred flesh for food? What can his generous death for you avail you: if you never think enough on it, for that to excite you to imitate his constancy; if you never eye it with seriousness enough to pay him the tribute of one tender tear? On *Friday* next therefore, I invite you to a rehearsal of this tragedy. At which I hope to see you all in tears. The fact is so affecting it will need no pomp of words, no helps of rhetoric, no poetic flights, to melt your souls (if you have souls to melt) to pity for your Lord, and more to

a just grief for your own past insensibility to all he has done and suffer'd for you. Then shall you hear each bleeding limb of his with reproachful tenderness cry-out to you: "O Christians! Why, why thus irresolute in good? What evils have you borne as yet, what wounds have you to shew, what toils and hardships have you endured which I have not shared with you? I had but one mortal life to lose; and that I cheerfully resign'd for you; to teach you that death is no evil when the cause you die for, or die in, is good. Fight on then and struggle even to death with that inveterate foe, who never will give over teasing and tempting you while you have life. Remember, your victory is in your hands. I died to purchase it for you. Remember, if you have lost ground, the greater cause you have to fight more manfully henceforth to regain that ground. Remember, that Christian constancy consists not in repelling many temptations, but in persisting to the last in conquering all. Reflect that, if you are by nature weak, my grace can make you strong. If you have hitherto been indolent or faithless in your Christian warfare; it is high time to fight with double fervor. If you have hitherto contended nobly for the glorious Palm; it is now too late to tarnish all the glory of your past religious struggles, by suffering any trial to overcome you for the future. What interest but yours could I have in view, in giving-up my precious flesh and blood, that it might invigorate you against your spiritual enemies? Why did I leave it you but to make the feeble strong, to make the strong more vigorous? Ah! use then this sacred food to repair the little wastes of grace, which human frailty may effect; and, fed and cherish'd with it, be constant in resisting the inveterate foe, who never ceases to besiege your souls in hopes of forcing or surprising them into ruin: Be firm and you shall conquer." O Christians! If this melting language which every bleeding limb of JESUS speaks, is not enough to force a flood of pity into your eyes; if it is not capable of striking fire in your hearts; if it will not animate you to everlasting love for Christ and constancy in his service; I have done with you, I give you up for lost. In short, Christians, if you are not afraid of being press'd into your Saviour's service; be present at his Passion next *Friday*: And give all your attention to his sufferings. But then be sure you bring with you the dispositions of piety necessary to render your attention fruitful. For whoever, on that day, shall attend and not give themselves up to Christ with all tenderness, love, and constancy, they will evidently shew, that either, with excess of infidelity, they disbelieve the sufferings of our GOD; or, with excess of ingratitude, disregard them.

SERMON

S E R M O N

On EASTER SUNDAY.

St. MARK, xvi. 6, 7.

Be not dismay'd: You seek JESUS of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen, he is not here. —He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see him.

LAST Sunday, beloved Christians, the Gospel invited us to take part with Christ in a solemn seemingly chearful triumph which was big with nothing but the most terrifying apprehensions of funeral grief. This day, to make us ample amends, it invites us to his sepulchre with the *Marys*, that our funeral rites may be big with nothing but triumphal joy. Last Sunday, mindful of one part of his prediction to his beloved disciples, *The world shall rejoice, but you shall be made sorrowful*; we consoled with our JESUS, amidst the loudest acclamations of public alacrity: To-day made witnesses of the accomplishment of that other part, *Your sorrow shall be converted into joy*; we congratulate with Jesus and raise our voices in chearful *Alleluias* amidst the profoundest silence of death and sin, and Satan. Last Sunday, in a word, the melancholy prospect of future sufferings and death, which thy inconstancy of the *Jews* threaten'd JESUS with, fill'd our souls with too many terrors not to damp all our pleasures and make the matter of his triumph the subject of our dejection. But ah! The glorious fruits, which the constancy of JESUS has, this day, drawn from those sufferings, and that death, both for himself and us, are too abounding not to dissipate all our fears, all our doubts, all our griefs, and make us triumph over the sepulchre. Away then, Christians, let us haste to his tomb, to rejoice over his lifeless body, we who were constrain'd to weep over it living! If we grieved to see him suffering on his cross; we will rejoice to see his precious limbs, in the sepulchre, no more sensible to sufferings. If we wept to see his blessed frame profaned and disfigured with spittle, dirt and bruises; let our consolation be to anoint and embalm it in the monument. In a word, let us bury our hearts in one grave with JESUS; and let our comfort be henceforth to hug the melancholy thought, that we are still living to weep for JESUS, who having suffer'd all which could be suffer'd, is now deceased

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and capable no more of suffering. Come then, dismay! be thou our joy; and lead us forward to JESUS in his tomb. But ah, where is he! Where indeed Christians? If you seek JESUS in his sepulchre; how should you find him? Away then, away with all your griefs. This is a day which calls on you for all the joy your souls are able to exert. Away from his tomb, I say: And be not dismay'd. *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified: He is risen; he is not here. He goeth before you into Galilee; there you shall see him.* O welcome news big with exstatic gladness! O Heaven! Supply me with more souls than one! Or kindly dilate this one to a capacity of bearing such excess of joy; ere it constrain my heart to burst with the enjoyment of all which devotion has of most exquisite delight. O my dear auditors! How does the narrowness of our spirits confine us from feeling all the joy we would! But since it is so: But since we cannot rejoice as we would; let us rejoice all we can. This sacred mystery of Christ's resurrection is full of mysteries and all demand their separate joy: All are joyful alike, but all are not equally fruitful to us in their joy. Let us then lay-out our alacrity on those reflections which are most likely to fructify edification to us. And since our hearts are not capacious enough to rejoice sufficiently with JESUS on his glorious resurrection, let us employ all our joy in thanking his mercy, that we are risen along with him. "Let every-one, says a venerable father: Let every-one who rejoices in the resurrection of Christ, rejoice chiefly that he himself is risen in and with Christ." For my own part, Christians, I am resolved to draw all my present joy from the blessed source which the angel points-out to the three *Marys*. And tho' all my dismay for the death of Jesus is banish'd by the grateful news that *He is risen*; yet the chief subject of my joy is to reflect that *He is gone before us into Galilee*, and that *there we shall see him*. To make you then sharers in the motives of my present joy, I shall now proceed to the pleasing task of shewing you,

- I. What exquisite comfort the mystery of our divine Lord's resurrection is capable of affording,

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to such Christians as take care to imitate him in it by a perfect spiritual resurrection.

II. What this spiritual resurrection must consist in; and how it must be acquired and maintain'd.

"O lovely JESUS! O no more suffering but triumphing JESUS! O thou, who, this day, in an ample victory over death and sin, has't rais'd us to the liberty of grace and open'd to us a free access to eternal life! Vouchsafe to make us grateful to thee for this excess of bounty. And since thy constancy in suffering and dying for us has purchased us the grace of rising with thee in the newness of our spirit; O add the gift of perseverance to thy former mercies; that we may die no more but to the flesh and sin!"

I. O! What a consolation would it not be to us, Christians; and how tolerable would it not make the bitter pill of mortal life; could we but be possess'd of a preservative against the terrors of death? And what greater or more exquisite comfort could we wish to draw from the resurrection of JESUS than to see death so depress'd by it, and his power so abridged as that we might cheerfully say, death has lost his sting and exists only in his name. But whatever a *Cbrysolom* might advance to strengthen his assertion, that, "Christ by rising from the dead, has destroy'd the very names of hell and death:" Whatever arguments I might add to persuade you that the separation of the soul from the body has now nothing terrible in it but what our ill-grounded fears create: You would, none of you be disposed to believe me. Nor indeed (to act the sincere part which becomes me) can I say, that I should readily believe myself. What! surely the correspondence between the spirit and the flesh of man is not of so cold and indifferent a nature, that each can part from the other without either's feeling the reciprocal convulsions of anguish excited by sympathetic distress? It no way surprises us when we read the sad story of the two *Grecian* ladies, who when *Constantinople* was sacked by the *Turks*, and it's inhabitants were carried-away into slavery, fell into the hands of two different masters. These two fond sisters, yet more strongly allied by friendship than by blood, seeing themselves on the point of being separated forever in this life, ran of one accord into each-other's arms to take their last adieu; and thus eagerly clinging soul to soul, in the expression of their mutual regret to be sever'd, they expired in the embraces of inseparable love; and died together unable to sustain the cruel anguish of subsisting apart. And what is the union of the fondest nearest relations to the intimacy of soul and body? What wonder then can it be that these should not be able to separate without feeling the spasm of

an excruciating agony? Let what will then be said, I cannot help thinking, with St. *Peter Chrysologus*, that death is a dreadful adversary to confront; since "the bare aspect of it is sufficient to terrify and dismay every human sense and sensation."

Think me not therefore of so fantastic or abstracted a genius, beloved Christians; as to think of denying you the little natural tribute of anguish, the little vents of repugnance which are indulged even to every trivial friendship. The joyful reflection that JESUS of *Nazareth* who was crucified is risen, may tranquillize the tumultuous fancies of nature; stifle them it cannot. I neither say then, nor mean to say, that death may not awaken in you any horrors. But I do say, as St. *Paul* said before me: It is highly reasonable, that, reflecting on the resurrection of JESUS, you should take courage, moderate your fears, and not be sorrowful, as also others who have no hope.* That the fears of Christians, who know that Christ is risen from the dead to raise them to life with him, and who therefore hope to rise with him, to rise like him, glorious and immortal, ought to be more filial, more modest, more moderate, less uncomfortable than those of unbelievers who are void of hope. Shall we see in the mirror of contemplation, those divine members, which but three days ago with weeping eyes we bewail'd eclipsed and disfigured with blood and dirt and bruises; shall we, I say, perceive those sacred members shoot forth from the sepulchre, like a new sun from the *East*, all clad with resplendent rays of light and glory; and shall we not remain secure and comforted in our certain hopes, built on his never-failing promise, that, rising with him, these members too of ours shall fare no worse; though now so miserable that we can scarce support them with any consolation? O the sweet reflection! How ought not this enchanting thought to dissipate the thickest clouds of melancholy which the apprehensions of our dissolution are capable of raising in us? Observe but the Sun, says St. *Zeno*: "The Sun has it's birth in the morning, and the evening of the day which gave birth to it buries all it's lights: Still does it not hesitate to move forward towards it's end, but steadily meets the night which is to serve for it's sepulchre; sure of having the tomb of it's fainting rays converted into a cradle of the fulness of it's future splendour." And why should that luminous phoenix (if I may be indulged the metaphor) hesitate to undergo an eclipse which shall renew it to glory? Why shun a tomb which shall restore it more brilliant? Why start back from a cloud which shall revive it to all it's native splendor? O Christians! What is the death of this flesh but like the eclipse of the sun? Would to Heaven I could say that in

* *Thessalonians* iv.

our constancy, we resemble that planet ! But, alas, such is our pusillanimous inconstancy, that we cannot with any comfort resolve to meet death, tho' faith assures us, that we are parting from ourselves only to succeed ourselves ; that our sepulchres (tired with keeping our stale putrefaction) will restore us back to ourselves ; that, in a word, our flesh, crumbled into dust and ashes, shall out of those very ashes rise again to a new form and life : But O what a form ! how beautiful ! how much more noble ! how much more perfect ! how much more excellent !

JOB, that image of death in it's most terrifying disguise, *who with a shell scraped off the corruption*, * from his body, was *sitting on his dunghill*, † enjoying (as it was) his sores, hugging his worms and delighting in the misery which corroded him. But what ! *Job sitting* ? Is not sitting a posture of content ? Yes, if we believe the sacred expositors, it is not only a posture of content but of alacrity ? Ah ! What cause of alacrity, what subject of joy then could our miserable sufferer find to amuse him ? What, though, nauseating every aliment of his life, which, like a rotted marsh, had nothing to feed him with but the coarsest weeds, he could bear, with a steadiness more than heroic, the heaven-bred fire which consumed his rich flocks and his fields, the whirlwind which robb'd him of his houses and hopes, and the destruction which swept away his riches and servants ? Could he have bowels of tenderness and not dissolve them through his eyes in tears of compassion for the tragic catastrophe of ten children taken-off at a stroke ? Could he have any spirits left and not resent the injurious insolent aggravations of his taunting friends ? Could he have a soul and not be fired with indignation at the bitter detested counsels and suggestions of an ill-advised consort ? What then, and where was the matter to afford him occasion of alacrity ? Were his sores, his poverty, putrefaction and pains such subjects of joy, that *Job* could sit and enjoy himself on his dunghill ? Ah Christians ! As *Origenes* justly observes on this passage, we are not sufficiently apprised of the mysterious comforts of a well-grounded hope. *Job* prophetically contemplates his sores, and lodges them in the wounds of that crucified *Jesus*, who is to heal them. Considering those sores on the dunghill he bemoans them : But hence rising to behold them glorious beyond the dunghill, and comparing present *Job* with *Job* who is to be ; he bemoans only his present weakness in being concern'd at them. In short, *Job* in pain is comforted with the foresight of *Job* in glory ; *Job* in corruption rejoices at *Job* in resurrection. " *Job*, says this learned father, sat content on the dunghill in the enjoyment of his

* *Job ii.*

† *Ibid.*

" worms ; because confident, that, after this corruption, his flesh should rise to incorruption." Ah ! Methinks I see this holy martyr of patience sitting triumphant over his miseries with all that serenity which the Holy Ghost has recorded of him, and which nothing could give him but the blessed foresight of the sacred mystery which this day excites all our transports of joy. " Courage (methinks he cries, courage, my soul) *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away : Let the name of the Lord be blessed for ever.*" * Welcome losses ! welcome pains ! which shall be recover'd with so much sure and delight : Come then, corruption, feed on these sores ; strip these members naked of flesh ; lay open to view these bones, and nerves and sinews. Ah ! There will come ; yes, there will come a day, when a better portion shall fall to us, become children of a fairer inheritance. Already, already do these eyes, triumphant over time and distance, behold gloriously rising from his sepulchre my dear redeemer, my sovereign restorer, my universal only good. Hence is my soul buoyed-up with such a joyful hope as makes the matter of my pains the subject of my joy. For I know that my Redeemer lives and that I am to rise again from the earth." O glorious pattern of a hope becoming Christians ! O how stinging a reproach will't not thou prove to the mean diffidence of slow-believing Christians ? " Thus, says *Augustin*, behold how holy *Job* externally over-run with worms and corruption, inwardly overflows with immortality." And thus, say I, learn to believe and hope.

Death, dearest christian auditors, may destroy us ; annihilate us, it cannot. It divides indeed the soul from the body ; but has not the power to take away from either the seeds of their mutual intimacy. No, no : Our spirits shall return, must return again to re-embrace these members, dear to them indeed ; but frailly, refractorily, treacherously dear to them at present ; whereas hereafter the very same members shall be dear to them as ever, but shall be faithfully, obediently, eternally so. Away then, doubts and fears, and diffidences, from these christian hearts ! Away vain, senseless, melancholy and dismay ! Come, Rather let us joyfully repair together to the sepulchre of *Christ*, there to throw off all idle apprehensions of that blessed dissolution which shall yield us so substantially, so gloriously, so everlasting to ourselves. But in his tomb ? Ah ! He is no more there. No matter. So much the more then, *Be not dismay'd. You seek *Jesus* of Nazareth, who was crucified ? And he is risen ? And he is not here ? The greater reason then have*

* *Job. ii.*

you and I to throw-off all our fears of death, now conquer'd, now dethroned. The greater cause have we with joy to seek our sepulchre in that of Jesus, and, lodged with our affections in it, to trust that we shall rise with him. Ah! Let then these bodies of clay, dissolve when God shall please; if they are to be new form'd again, never more to be dissolved. Let the corruption of this flesh be buried in the earth, since it shall thence rise forth to incorruption. Come, Death, and strip us; the sooner the better: strip us of these rags of mortality, that they may be refitted into robes of immortal glory. What is it to us, whether sooner or later we descend to rot a while in the grave; when sure, that *our Redeemer liveth and that we shall rise out of the earth and shall be encompass'd again with our skin, and in our flesh shall see God; Whom we shall see ourselves; and our eyes shall be bold?* Ah! With what fears can death or the grave affect us, while *this hope is laid up in our bosom?*

O how penurious nevertheless would not the source of joy be, which we draw, this day, from the resurrection of Jesus; if, after being thus gloriously restored to ourselves and to such unspeakable advantage, we were again to endure the agony of another dissolution! but ah my glorified love! This, this is the comfort transcending all other comforts, that thy glorious resurrection secures us from a second separation. What more joyous sight can we wish for than to see our souls become once more inhabitants, but more happy inhabitants for eternity, of those bodies no longer frail, no longer wretched, no longer perishable; but firm, happy, and unalterable? O blessed consolation, the sweetest which could shoot-forth to us from the sepulchre of Jesus! Reason had the ingenious *St. Peter Chrysologus* to call the sepulchre a *second kind of womb*. For Christ thence taking his sacred flesh again was re-born to us with a newness of life no more subject to dissolution: And we, made heirs to his blessed prerogatives, once we have had these members re-model'd in the *second womb of the grave*, shall be put in possession of the same glorious advantages. Yes, these bodies shall rise thence more beautiful than before, without ever being disfigured by any deformity; ever in peace undisturb'd by dissension; always pure, without danger from incentives; always in health, free from humours to annoy it; always in joy which no nuisance shall approach to molest; "always in day (as *St. Zeno describes it*) which nor night shall eclipse, nor cloud overspread, nor shadow disturb."

So tender, so transporting is this thought, that, violenting all the faculties of my soul, it disables me from pursuing this subject. Ah, dearest auditors!

* *Job xix.*

With what regret do I drop here the matter of our greatest consolation, because too abounding with delight is the argument to dwell on it, without weakening our senses! O could I also but drop with the matter of my joy, the body of this death which so depresses the vivacity of my hopes! O lovely stars, which, shining so gayly at night, are eclipsed ere the dawn! O sprightly flowers, which, gayly blooming in the morning, languish with the setting sun! How do I envy the shortness of your existence on the earth? How do my yearning vitals, with anxious restlessness, send forth their eagerest sighs after the life and author of all life and existence: O my Redeemer! What with-holds me from taking refuge in that sepulchre, in that grave, which thou hast past through to enrich Christianity with the noblest pretensions? What shall I say but, with *St. Paul*, * that, *I am straiten'd . . . having desire to be dissolved and be with Christ*. Ah! we are straiten'd; yes: And therefore unable to say more, let me shut me up within me. O my soul? I ask thee no questions, why thou delayest thus to quit this prison of mortality. It is fit the will of Heaven should be thine. But O my heart! O my flesh! O my senses! With you let me reason. Why this strange repugnance to death and the grave? The point is, --to throw-off the miserable condition of a body full of pains, full of aches, full of wants, full of wretchedness, mortal, prone to sin, prone to folly, prone to destruction; and that in order to put-on again this same body in a perfect state, a state of ease, a state of freedom, a state of delight, secured from every want, every danger, every evil: And yet shall you start-back at the thought of death, with a horror and dismay, like others who have not hope? Away, away with these idle terrors: Remember that, *flesh and blood* in it's present miserable condition, *cannot possess the kingdom of God: Neither shall corruption possess incorruption.*† No: To live eternally with Christ you must die with Christ. *For this corruptible must put-on incorruption; and this mortal put-on immortality. And when this mortal hath put-on immortality: then indeed shall Death be swallow'd-up in victory,* ‡ the victory which this glorious day has wrought. Away then, once more, I say, with your vain terrors: See in spirit how your redeemer shews you his sacred scars all brilliant with glorious splendor. Behold his sacred body, one time all livid, torn, and shamefully disfigured, now gay and firm, and luminous; immortal, glorified, and heavenly: Such too shall all our bodies be, if we sustain with him. *Understand what I say,* says our apostle, § *Be mindful, that our Lord, Jesus Christ is risen again from the dead. A faithful saying: For if we be dead with him;*

* 1 *Philipp. xxiii.*

§ 2 *Tim. ii.*

† 1 *Cor. xv.*

‡ *Ibid.*

we shall also live with him. If we sustain; we shall also reign with him. Such, beloved auditors, such is the exquisite comfort which our divine Lord's resurrection is big with to every Christian, who takes care to imitate him in it by rising with him in spirit.

II. If you have accompanied your Saviour in his death, beloved Christians, by becoming dead to sin and sinful inclinations; you are now, I hope, risen, with him to a life of grace. Your resurrection then, to be like his, must consist in a steady perseverance in grace. Christ is risen for his own sake: Christ is risen for yours. He is risen for his own sake, to conquer death: And therefore now *he stands; he dies no more; death shall have no more dominion over him.* He is risen for your sakes, to triumph over sin and take from you that only sting of death: Therefore are you in imitation of him henceforth to stand unshaken in his love, *to die no more to grace, death must have no more dominion over you,* by any future relapse into sin, into sinful occasions, or affections. In short, the standard of your resurrection must be the perfect newness of your desires. Wherefore, says St. Paul, *If you be risen with Christ seek the things which are above, where Christ is sitting at the right-hand of God. Mind the things which are above; not the things which are on earth.* * For if you really are risen with Christ; *You are dead to the world: And your life is bidden with Christ in God.* † And the blessed fruit of this spiritual resurrection will be, that, *when Christ, your life, shall appear; then you also shall appear with him in glory.* ‡

To take then a perfect plan of our spiritual resurrection from that of our divine Lord, let me once more, Christians, invite you to accompany me, with the spices of a perfect zeal and humility, to the monument of my Jesus. Here let us contemplate our glorious model, triumphant over his tomb and learn to triumph with him. But here, *did I say?* No: *I forgot Jesus, who was crucified, is risen.* His vacant monument forestalls the angel's testimony, that *he is risen:* 'Tis vain then to seek him, at his tomb, now *he is risen:* Yes, yes; it is quite in vain. *He is not here,* the heavenly messenger declares. Ah! Where then, celestial spirit, where shall we seek him? "Where? Not in his tomb, replies the angel. Jesus when crucified, was laid in this sepulchre. But now *he is risen; he is not here.* Behold the place where they lay'd him, and be convinced, that he has now forsaken it; that he has turn'd his back on it, never to return to it again. Now *he stands: he dies no more; death shall have no more dominion over him.* Go then; and if you died to sin as he died

* Colossians iii. † Ibid. ‡ Ibid.

"for it:---Go then, and if you are risen to grace" as he to glory; copy after him: Forake the sepulchre of your former corruptions, never more to revert to it. Stand firm in your good purposes, *die no more* to his grace, by relapses. Let the death of sin and sinful affections have no more dominion over you. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified? He is risen: He is not here. Go then once more; and if you seek him in good earnest with the desire of finding him, seek him where he is, not where he is not. Behold (concludes the angel not without mystery) *He goes before you into Galilee: There you shall see him.*" To Galilee then, Beloved Christians! to Galilee.

However heedlessly you may have over-look't this passage in our Gospel: Believe me, it has it's mystery; and carries with it an important lesson worthy of your attention. Galilee in Hebrew means nothing less than revolution. Jesus then after his resurrection went into revolution; pass'd into a total change, a perfect newness, still perfectly the same, yet, perfectly another: The same in his flesh but not in the qualities of it. O glorious revolution of Christ's sacred body in his blessed resurrection, from the sepulchre to Galilee, from inanimacy to agility, from pain to impassibility, from necessary extension to penetrability, from death to immortality, from confinement to liberty, from oppression to triumph, from transitory shame to endless glory! O dearest Christians of mine! Such was the revolution your crucified Redeemer pass'd over to, in his glorious resurrection, which makes, this day, the subject of our joy, the matter of our greatest consolation, the object of our Christian hope. And, O my triumphant love! O my resplendent Jesus! grant this our hope may be well-grounded! It will be so, beloved; if you take care to copy after him in your spiritual resurrection, by passing forthwith into a serious revolution of yourselves, a total change of your manners, a perfect newness of your lives. O the glorious share you will have in the blessed fruits of your Jesus's resurrection; if, rising spiritually with him, you pass after him from the sepulchre of your former vices to the Galilee of a perfect conversion; from indolence and spiritual sloth to earnestness and fervor in good; from suffering unfruitfully in the cause of vice to suffering with advantage for the cause of virtue; from obduracy of heart to the yielding sensibility of mercy and charity; from the death of sin to a life of righteousness; from the slavery of Satan to the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free; from the weight of guilt to the lightness of a good conscience; and from the ignominy of a scandalous conduct to the giving glory to God in an edifying deportment. To Galilee then, to Galilee, beloved Christians: There you shall see Je-

sus. If you seek him there; you shall surely find him. In this revolution, in this perfect change of yourselves, in this *Galilee* must your spiritual resurrection consist: In this must it be made manifest. If in this you are seen to Jesus; Jesus will be seen to you: But not otherwise.

To rise then, to rejoice, to be glorified with Christ, rise with him, be perfectly changed with him; be new with him in spirit, though the same in person. In short, as St. Paul says, *Mortify therefore your members which are upon earth, fornication, uncleanness, lust, evil-concupiscence and avarice which is the service of idols. Lay you also away anger, indignation, malice, blasphemy, filthy talk out of your mouth. Lye not one to another. * It is for these things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of incredulity. In which also you walk'd sometime, when you lived in them.†* But now, I hope, you are dead to these, and your life is bidden with Christ in God. It is now time then for you to live henceforth a quite opposit life, and to put-on, as the elect of God holy and beloved, the bowels of mercy, benignity, humility, modesty, patience, supporting one-another, and pardoning one-another, if any have a quarrel against any man: As also our Lord hath pardon'd us; so also you.‡ In short, dear fellow-strugglers, if you have hitherto been guilty of uncleanness; your lives must henceforth be all purity and innocence: If you have despised the love of God to serve the idols of your avarice; you must away with those strange gods from before him, and give yourselves up to him for the future in the steady love of justice, pursuit of mercy, and humble walking in his holy fear: If you have been slaves to passion, malice and revenge; you must from this time forward throw-off those slavish bands and practice meekness with freedom, mercy with simplicity, and forgiveness with cordiality: And if you have hitherto been—(what shall I say?)—any-thing which you should not have been; throw-off that any-thing, whatever it be. And stripping yourselves of the old-man with his acts, put-on the new, him who is renew'd unto knowledge, § by the grace of a glorious, perfect resurrection.

You, O hitherto libidinous! Risen from the sepulchre, the loathsome sepulchre of your uncleanness, you must return no more thither; you must never approach near it more. You must flee for ever from that private party, that licentious company, the unlauring conversation of that woman; from that bagnio, that coffee-house, that tavern; from that assembly, that occasion, that other stumbling-block. Hitherto you have dwelt in the sty of swine; *What said I?* You have been buried in a sepulchre of filth, of corruption, of horror; the jakes of worms, of insects, of vermin. Now you

* *Colossians* iii. † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.* § *Ibid.*

are pass'd to the *Galilee* of a perfect purity. Now you must be all continency, all charity, all purity. And your habitation must be so clean, so chaste, so spotless, that angels may delight to accompany you, and Jesus may delight in conversing with you. O hitherto revengeful! You once pass'd, with shameful revolution from fraternal charity to fraternal hatred; from the life of grace, to the sepulchre of revenge: But now you must pass from the sepulchre to *Galilee*: Now to enjoy the benefit of your Saviour's resurrection, your spiritual revolution must be from resentment to patience, from passion to meekness, from revenge to forgiveness. That Jesus Christ, whom you, this day, adore and joy in the resurrection of, had much more bitter enemies than yours are, endured much more cruel injuries than you ever did, and submitted to much more crying injustices than e'er were done to you. Yet did he not only forbear to wreak vengeance on his enemies; not only did he forget the outrages done him; not only pardon them; but in the midst of his worst treatment pray'd for those who treated him thus barbarously: Nay more: Hear, O resentful Christians, and take example: He even died for them as well as for you; rise again for them as well as for you; and went before into *Galilee* to be seen by, and reconciled with them as well as you. In vain then do you believe in his death, in vain do you rejoice in his resurrection, if you copy not his example. If you forgive not with him and like him; if you part not with every grudge, every rancour; you prefer the sepulchre of your former enmity to the blessed *Galilee* of charity, and therefore will never be intitled to see the face of your Lord who is risen and gone before you into *Galilee*, where alone you can see him. Ah! Christians be resolute then: Quit the hateful sepulchre of former enmities, vengeance and rancour; full of nothing but anxiety, restlessness, fury, disorders and incessant horror. And go forwards to the blessed *Galilee*, the happy state of charity and reconciliation. In that it is you must seek, and in that alone you will see your Jesus, who was crucified for charity. There all is calm, all is in peace: Where charity reigns, no discontentments can enter to oppress the heart; no regrets to molest the mind; no jealousies can break peace; no injuries can move indignation; no broils can interrupt repose: For charity softens and sweetens every incident; fills the soul with unchangeable cheerfulness; dissipates every cloud of disgust; makes the heaviest burdens light of carriage; and provides wine and oil to heal up every sore. O misers! O covetous! O worldlings! You too have pass'd from the life of obedience to God's laws to the sepulchre of sordid lucre. Hitherto many of you have made no scruple of devouring the substance of your neighbour, no scruple of gnawing it away

away with your usury and oppressions, no scruple of consuming, or at least diminishing it with your frauds and infidelities: And most of you have at least thought of nothing so much as of becoming rich. You have now then another quite opposit revolution to make: From the sepulchre to Galilee. If you are desirous of rising fruitfully with Christ; you must follow Christ. Behold *he goes before you into Galilee: There you shall see him.* He is risen to a perfect change of state, a perfect newness: So must you. Your change must now be from your fraudulent traffick to lawful commerce. You must pass from injuring your brethren to righting them, from oppressing them to succouring them: You must pass yet farther from wronging them to making restitution where it is due, whether of substance or of fame: And you who have not wherewith to restore what you ought, must wish to do it, long to do it, resolve to do it when able, and redouble your industry to become able. Even you who have happily no restitution to make, have at least your change also to labour at, a change from the inordinate love of temporal riches to a fervent desire of eternal treasures. In short, *If you are risen with Christ seek the things which are above, where Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified and now is risen, sits at the right hand of God. Mind the things which are above and not the things which are on earth.*

You see, Christians, in what your spiritual resurrection must consist; you see by what means, you are to imitate your divine Lord in his glorious resurrection. Remember that this day we celebrate the new paschal solemnity of the Lord. *And this, says the sacred Code, is the Phase, that is the passage of the Lord.* And truly is it the passage of the Lord, if we make it along with him: In-as-much as it is his grace which enables us so to do. Implore of him then this grace of a total passage, this grace of a happy revolution; this grace of a perfect change: Implore it with fervor, humility and perseverance, and he will certainly grant it.

To conclude, reverting sinners: *The night is now past, the day is come,* the great day of the triumphant resurrection of JESUS CHRIST. Pass then with him from the sepulchre to Galilee, from the darkness of sin, to the light of grace. *You have been one-while darkness: But now, I hope, you are light in our Lord,* * by the grace of your Easter communion. *Jesus of Nazareth, who was cru-*

* *Romans iii.*

cified, is risen: He whom you seek is no more in his sepulchre: He can no more put-up with the society of the dead. *That he died, it was for once and no more: That he liveth, he liveth to God;* and that forever. For you then to live with him, you must henceforth live, like him, a life of newness; a life of sanctity; a life all heavenly, all given to God. This is the only means to drown the terrors of death, the greatest of our miseries upon earth, in that greatest of consolations which the sacred mystery of our divine Lord's resurrection is big with; the reasonable hope of sharing in his immortality: This is the sure means of giving, *on this day which the Lord has made,* honour to Christ, pleasure to the angels, glory to God, and joy to his Church: And by this means you will reap to yourselves an eternity of joy; and! such a joy, says the Lord, *as no-one shall take from you.*

O children of men then; let me say with the Psalmist! *How long will you remain thus heavy of heart? Why do you delight in vanity and seek a lye?* † You want to be happy? And can you then expect to find that happiness in emptiness and fiction? Know, once for good, *that the Lord hath render'd his holy-one wonderful,* ‡ on purpose, that, fixing your admiration on him, *he might settle your hope singularly* § on him. Does not your Saviour shew, in his blessed resurrection, where you ought to seek your sovereign only beatitude? Ah! seek it then *above*, where he is, and where alone that is: *Not upon earth*, where he is not, nor consequently that can be. The happiness you are for ever in search of is a real substantial good. But ah! It is not to be found on earth. *You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified? He is risen: He is not here. He goes before you to Galilee:* He is gone before you to Heaven. There you shall see him: There you shall find him, and in him your only happiness. To Heaven then, my brethren, to Heaven, let us aspire. There it is we shall find, there it is we shall love; there it is we shall enjoy, a blissful good; the sight of which will never tire us, the love of which will never be extinguish'd, the enjoyment of which will never cloy us, the glory of which will never end. O may our souls henceforth, despising all besides, with all their power and affections cling to this! I beseech God: *In the name, &c.*

* *Psalm iv.* † *Ibid.* ‡ *Ibid.*

S E R M O N

On LOW SUNDAY.

St. JOHN, xx. 19.

JESUS came and stood in the midst of his disciples, and say'th to them: Peace be to you.

HOW strangely deluding is the world! O how unaccountably deluded are the followers of the world! Horrid fraud of that! Horrid infatuation of this! Who would believe it, Christians? The world has found the means to render virtue odious: And GOD, with all his adorable attributes, is not yet become amiable in the sight of worldlings! The world, with it's native perfidy has taken care to delineate virtue in the lying colours of a poor, oppressive, beggarly, austere and cruel mistress, which, rich only in spleen, has nothing to reward it's adherents with but misery and want. And O what a horrid jumble of forbidden features do not worldlings give to their ideas of the GOD of Hosts! They represent him to their imagination as a being extremely severe, unrelenting, furious, who is ever levelling with sword in hand at the destruction of his servants; who is always seeking his diversion in their miseries and sporting in their distresses: and whose rigour is such as makes it but one and the same thing to give themselves up to GOD, and to give-up forever the enjoyment of every pleasure! In short, there is no one terror in holy writ which they do not make use of to make the very name of the Almighty terrifying. But let us discard this phantom idea of our GOD, this lying picture of him, form'd out of all which our fears and ignorance, or *Satan's* malice could misrepresent him with, and form'd out of nothing of all which is really like him. What! Is there any thing after all of so horrible in GOD, as is believed by some? No, no: GOD has not any cause of horrors in him. He the enemy of our ease and comfort? He envious of our peace and joy? Ah! It is base, ungrateful and perfidious blasphemy. It is a grievous outrage done to our good and gracious GOD, barely to suspect him of being thus cruel or severe. But how does not even he-himself effectually convince us of the contrary? Hear you not the enchanting accents with which he labours to dispel all the sullen clouds of our ill-grounded diffidences,

when, *standing in the midst* of his disciples, he saith: *Peace be with you?* See you not the sacred wounds with which he purchased for you the peace he proffers you? That peace is yours then for accepting. It is not therefore, like the fallacious peace of worldlings, ever in reversion never in possession. No, beloved; on the reverse. The peace which GOD and JESUS have to give is certain and immediate. Whenever we find GOD we have found and gotten possession of true peace. O Christians! How long will you remain undetermin'd to this truth! How long will you be froward and hesitate to seek this peace which JESUS offers, this only peace worth having? O that I might be so happy as to become this day a successful interpreter of JESUS's words here cited to you! And why shall I not at least endeavour at it? Attend then, beloved Christians, and be convinced of two maxims as true as they are little understood. Whatever may be said, it is very certain:

I. That life is not worth possessing without peace: *And,*

II. That, they seek peace in vain who seek it out of GOD.

"O GOD, thou Author of all happiness and sacred center of all peace which can be worth enjoying! O give thy servants that blessing, that solid quiet which the world has not to give, and which is no where to be found but in thyself. O finish to convince us that this rude, restless earth is not the place where true tranquillity resides; that, our hearts no longer fixt on vain pursuits, may henceforth rise above the joys of this fallacious life, to seek their only true repose in loving and exulting with Thee."

I. It is not without reason that the angels who, at the birth of Christ, were sent to denounce his arrival on earth, to the shepherds, proclaim'd him to them under the name of peace. No, no: That divine Lord from all eternity was the great mediator and lover of our peace: Nay, as the great apostle of the *Gentils* styles him, *He is our peace it self,*

*who hath made both one; that he may create the two in himself into one new man, making peace.**

The chief end of his coming into this world, was to restore us to the true and solid peace, which we had lost by pursuing the peace of sinners. Therefore did he set-out with making a perfect reconciliation between God and man, by uniting both natures in one hypostatic union under his own sacred personality. Therefore did he make peace the chief object of his preachings and practice. Therefore did he recommend it frequently in his sermons to his apostles. Therefore did he enjoin them to inculcate the same to their disciples. Therefore did he bequeath it to them as his last legacy. And therefore does he now, after his resurrection, offer to put them in possession of it; if they will but apply to him for it. And no wonder is it, that Jesus, who came on earth purposely that *we may have life and have it more abundantly*, † should be thus solicitous of our peace, the only property which can render life a real blessing. For as he himself bears witness, the *pacific* only are the true children of God, and consequently the only persons who can be deem'd effectually blessed: Since the Almighty's chief design in fixing us a while in this life is, that, proving ourselves true and worthy children of God while on earth, by our truly christian pursuit of peace amidst the many struggles of our present warfare, we may be lifted to the eternal inheritance of heirs to God and coheirs with Christ in that immortal future state of blissful triumph which he originally created us for. That peace then, which may enable us to attain to this, is the only blessing worth our living for. Nay, I say more; Life, without this peace, cannot be worth possessing. For after all, to what a miserable purpose shall we have lived, (if we may call it *living*) if, for want of necessary peace in this life, we should be doom'd never to know a minute's peace in the next. If, I say, it may be call'd *living*. For, with me, it is a doubt as yet unsolved, whether existing in a state of constant disquiet, be not rather better call'd a slow-consuming death, a gradual dissolution than a state of life.

Peace in it's self contains a kind of close analogy with providence, a kind of providential dignity. The world itself could not subsist without it. It is the mutual harmony reigning between the elements, which preserves it in it's actual existence. Let but the mutual concord between air and fire, and earth and water be dissolved; and strait the world shall be resolved into it's mother *Chaos*. So let these principles but war against one-another in the human frame, and natural life grows sick; the body wastes; and (if there be not peace restored among the elemental qualities of which his body is

* *Ephesians ii.*

† *St. John x.*

composed) the man must die: How is not every private family and every common-weal disturb'd and hurried into dissolution; if peace preside not in the midst of it, to exert a providential care of it's existence? Wherefore, says Christ: *Every kingdom divided against itself shall be made desolate, and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand.* * Thus too is it impossible for human life to be enjoy'd in any rational consideration, where inward peace resides not in the heart to make life worth possessing?

This is a truth so obvious to every eye, that all mankind appear convinced of it. And therefore all cry-out for peace; all yearn after it, sigh after it, run after it. And all the subject of the universal toils, and sweats, and wars, and contests, and pursuits, which occupy the thoughts and wishes, time and talents of mankind, what is it, but to grasp one minute's true enjoyment of tranquillity, that only blessing worth their living for. Why does the miser carefully hoard-up his useless wealth; still toil for more; and, with an abstemiousness which hermits would find difficulty to exceed, deny himself even a scanty taste of all the fruits of a laborious industry? Why cark and care, and work and gain, and have, and starve in the very midst of plenty, but that he hopes in time to accumulate such plenty as may reward his yet insatiable cupidity with final peace? But does he ever reach to the possession of the darling object? Ah no! His avarice increasing with his wealth, his wants outgrowing his enormous acquisitions, his cares redoubled with his heaps, keep him for ever on the rack of sullen doubt; torture him perpetually with dreads of losing what he has and eagerness of adding to his fruitless stores; and, wringing his wretched heart with gloomy jealousies of every-one he knows, or servant or relation, or enemy or friend, fill his imagination with ten thousand terrors which rob him of his peace by day and even of his rest by night. Every word affords him subject of suspicion: Every look is matter for anxiety: Every sudden noise shall make him start: Every interval of silence throws him into panics. The day, he thinks, may treacherously betray his hoards; and dusk, he apprehends, may favour treachery and theft. In short, abroad, at home, in company, alone, awake or slumbering, his mind and heart are ever in a flutter; and, ever on the wing in the fatiguing search of peace, he every-day moves wider from it than before: And why? Ah! the reason is too evident. He seeks for peace where it is not. He seeks it in abundance of wealth: He seeks it in sinful attachments. In a word, he seeks it in wickedness: Whereas † *there is no peace to the wicked, says the Lord.*

* *St. Matth. xii.*

† *Isaiah xlviii. & v.*

What, think you, beloved, are the wanton and luxurious in search of; but peace? Why spend their patrimony, waste the bloom of life, destroy their health, expose their fortune, reputation, and liberty, and life, and souls in riotous diversions, toilsome amusements, and the most fatiguing dissipations; but that they hope to find, one day, a lasting endless peace in the possession of the empty, false and flattering pleasures they pursue? And do they find it ever? Alas the contrary is evident in the diseases, losses of limbs, of substance, reputation, ease and quiet, which in general attend inordinate enjoyment. What hazards, labours, anxieties, and cares and toils, and rude fatigues, with disappointments, perplexities, vexations and mishaps, attend the bare pursuit of sensual pleasures of every sort! And when attain'd, (if that be ever) what speedy loathings follow! How soon does spleen, fatigue, and gloomy disappointment and remorse succeed! Not to mention the shame, disgrace, resentment, penury, disquiet, sickness and innumerable catastrophes, which oftentimes ensue. And whence comes it that peace forever flees the embraces of these industrious searchers but that their industry is misapplied? But ah! Where is the wonder, that their pursuits of peace should lead them wide of it; when they are seeking it in every path but where it may be overtaken? They seek their peace in earthly pleasures: They seek it in profane attachments: To speak more plainly, they seek it in the paths of wickedness; and therefore never find it. For, *There is no peace to the wicked, says the Lord.*

Tell me, ambitious mortals; have you ever yet been able to procure one distant sight of peace with all your labours and sollicitudes? And yet what diligence, what study, what toils or what attendance have you spared, to gain this post, to grasp that power, to obtain this other title, dignity or pre-eminence? And have all these together ever help'd you to one minute's quiet? Not in the pursuit, at least. For, O what a deal of thinking, working, walking, waiting, talking, cringing, has it not cost you to solicit your promotion among the great! How often have you applied and been repulsed! How often applied again and been dismissed with empty-handed hopes; but not without a heart brimful of doubt, disgust and rage of disappointment! What insults, in a word, what treacheries, what servile, painful and undue submissions, on your side: What grievances, affronts and insolences, on the part of those whose interest you solicited, have you been forced to wipe off your sweating reddening brow, for fear of disobliging this man in power or that favorite, lest they should put a bar to your pursuit! No matter: You have gain'd your point at last. But has it help'd you to an intercourse with peace? Ah no! The post enjoy-

ed, the power, pre-eminence or dignity obtain'd, strait is the former ambition changed into a greater, an ambition to rise yet higher: And with the increasing passion, your anxiety increases. O what fears! what doubts! what circumspections, not to lose the ground already gain'd! What study, labour and contrivance, to gain that loftier eminence! What jealousies! what envies! what hatreds! what grudges gnaw you, at the sight of this competitor! What fury swells you with aversion from that other who is, or seems, in your way! How are you torn, for ever on the rack of restlessness, amidst a jarring tumult of unruly passions, of hope, despair, presumption, diffidence, ambition and disdain! And yet forsooth you still persist in the eager chase of peace; and wonder that you do not find it? Ah! How should you? You, who are seeking it in power, pomp and earthly vanities: You who are seeking it in wickedness, how can you hope to find it; when *there is no peace to the wicked, says the Lord?*

You, O revengeful! You, O implacably unmerciful! You, who blinded to all light of grace and reason, seek your satisfaction in cherishing inveterate hatreds within your breasts; in the destruction of your adversary's fame, and peace and life; in the subversion of whole families, to reach at one obnoxious person; in the intire desolation of your brethren's substance, honour, virtue, quiet, blood and soul, for every little opposition they have made against your lawless attempts! Do you hope to open to yourselves the gates of peace with pistols, swords and murderous instruments, adorn'd, gilt, beautified and finely polish'd, only to make your cruelties more pompously destructive? No, no: Be rather assured that the disturbances of peace are not the means to purchase peace. From Heaven, *methinks*, I hear St. Bernardin bespeak you thus: "Ah! revengeful Christians! whenever I have found my blood begin to boil with indignation at some injury received, I ever thought it the shortest way to peace, to carry that injury to the cross of Jesus and there expose it at my Redeemer's feet. And so far was I from being deceived in my hopes, that, that very injury when bathed in my Redeemer's blood, has served me like a master-key, to pass unstay'd, unhinder'd to the innermost recesses of internal peace." But ah revengeful! which of you all can say as much of your vindictive measures? What peace can all your bloody instruments and schemes afford you, in the pursuit of vengeance; while, every passion of your souls in fury, you are breathing nothing but revenge and slaughter? What torturing disquiets can the prospect of your vengeful malice give to him, at whom your hate is level'd, greater and more horrid than yourselves are previously tormented with, while-

while actually projecting it? And where you do succeed to rid your hatred of an obnoxious person; are you the nearer to the reach of peace? O the mighty glory you have to boast of, that, like a toad or scorpion, you have poison'd to death the rest or fame, or happiness of a brother! O the mighty satisfaction, for a tyger or a basilisk, that you have drain'd the blood of your fellow creature! O the mighty comfort to have robb'd a human image of the deity, of life; to have plunged perhaps into eternal flames a soul redeem'd with the invaluable blood of JESUS CHRIST! Yes: You are mighty likely to enjoy true peace, when void of Grace, when circled-round and inwardly possess'd with guilty terrors of GOD's just vengeance impending over your heads; of human public justice ever at your heels: When forced to wander vagabonds, like Cain, without a place of safety upon earth; when frightened by your guilt at every shadow you behold; when, night and day incessantly tormented by insufferable remorse of the conscience, your future hell shall be anticipated by a present hell within you? Ah self-deluding mortals! Yet your aim is peace? But alas you seek it where it is not. You seek it in mere discord: You seek it, to be plain, in wickedness: And therefore well may you not find it. *For there is no peace to the wicked, says the Lord.*

"But! Plenty, you'll say, is a blessing, and God has declared it such. The pleasures of life may be enjoy'd without guilt; and therefore may be pursued with innocence. Power and pre-eminence may enable us to do good. And justice requires us to make a distinction between the worthy and the unworthy, by rewarding the former and punishing the latter." All this is true, Christians; but no ways contradictory to what I have said. Plenty, riches, pleasures, power, dignity, esteem, are blessings all, when pursued without guilt, and possess'd without attachment; but otherwise are curses of our making. Punishment of criminals is a duty as obligatory as reward of merit, where all private rancour and resentment are removed. What then? The inordinate pursuit of all or any one of these has not the power to procure us one single minute's true content. "No? How comes it then, that so many men of wealth, of pleasure, of power, of prerogative, enjoy such ease of life? Whence comes it that so many men, who are daily watchful in the punishment of such as merit it, are ever in profound tranquillity? View but their countenance, and how serene they appear! Hearken but to their conversation; and who so happy, but must envy their peaceful situation?" Ah Christians! It is all deceit: Illusion all! Whatever the world may think; whatever worldlings may say; believe me: The peace of worldlings is mere self-imposi-

tion. They do but heal externally their inward gangrenes of discontent, saying, *Peace, Peace; and there is no Peace: ** And that for want of seeking their peace, fixing their repose in GOD, where alone it may be found. Can it then be doubted but that, without a greater, surer, more real tranquillity, life can have no enjoyment?

What in life can there be so desirable as peace? That is the blessing which all men covet above all other blessings, and chiefly pray, and want, and strive to obtain. It is the sister of joy and the mother of society. It links mankind together; it peoples cities, counties, kingdoms; establishes their commerce with all foreign nations; and makes them happy in themselves. Peace is the chief establisher of good order and salutary laws. It gives virtue its free exercise, smiles upon industry, and greatly favours all arts and sciences to flourish. In few words, peace is the well-spring of all the good the earth can promise or afford us. And wars are waged for nothing more than to attain to this. Yet is this peace which men are so solicitous to acquire, far wide, if we consider it barely in itself, of that true peace which Christ came down on earth to give. No, no: says Christ, if "This be the peace you seek, you'll never find it but in the name, *Peace, Peace*, you may call it; but you will find that, as my prophet says, *There is no peace*. Nor am I come to bring a peace like this: *I came not to bring peace but the sword, †* I came to destroy the external peace which worldlings are contending for, to establish in it's place the peace of GOD, that only peace which can deserve the name of peace; that only peace worth living for; that peace of heart, which may be found in GOD alone. And even that peace which I now give you: *For not as the world giveth it, do I give to you.*" †

II. Know then, O Christians, that the peace of the world is not the peace you ought to desire: Nay, it is no peace for you; nor worth your wishing or possessing. The peace of the world, at best, is but a treacherous dream; and rather leads mankind to sin and sorrow, than to virtue and repose. It may indeed procure you plenty and safety: But then it too generally tempts you to make bad use of that plenty and safety, to the soothing your appetites and giving the reins to your passions. It may link men together: But then it oftner cements them into factions than into friendships. It may establish common-weals: But in augmenting the number of a city's inhabitants, too often does it also contribute to the increase of the number of vicious ones; and, while it affords a legislature the leisure to make wholesome laws, it emboldens the

* Jerem. vi, & viii. † St. Matth. x. † St. John xiv.

whole nation, insolently to violate them, with wantonness, injustice and arrogance. If it favours arts and sciences, and industry; it favours still more the ignorance, indolence and vices of the slothful majority: If it second the interests of traffic, it also promotes avarice, fraud, imposition and perfidy: And where it introduces the blessing of plenty, it is sure to make way for the curses of luxury, riot and libertinism. Ah! What peace can this be for you to pursue, beloved Christians, which while it banishes temporal calamity from the public, introduces the most dreadful calamities of spirit among them, by lulling mankind into a lethargy of grace and a fatal oblivion of God? In fact, what is the use to which you generally apply this object of your eagereft pursuits? Is it to give glory to God in the more fervent, frequent application of your souls to the praises and homage of his heavenly Majesty: Or not rather to do honour to the world in the safer attachment to the pleasures it deceives you with? Is it, that you may, with greater intensity of fraternal charity devote yourselves to the service of God's images, your neighbours, in the practice of works of mercy spiritual and corporal: Or not rather, that you may indulge your own self-love with greater surety in the gratification of your sensual appetites? Ah! If you will but be ingenuous you must own, that the use you make of that peace which the world has to give is not the sanctification of your souls, but the ease and contentment of your senses flesh and passions.

Now give me leave to tell you, dear-loved audience, this is not the peace of JESUS CHRIST. He came not to bring into the world a *peace* of the senses, but the *sword* of victory over the senses. His peace is not a peace of the sense: It has nothing common with the sense: It is infinitely superior to the reach of sense, as the apostle of the *Gentils* expresses it in the epistle to the *Philippians*, * where he says, *The peace of God, which surpasses every sense, keep your hearts and your intelligences in CHRIST JESUS.* This is the true peace of Christians: And this preserves every heart, into which it gains admittance, from the love of the earth and all which is earthly: It fills the soul with pious sentiments and holy affections; and lifts it to a true intelligence of spirit. It consists in a perfect serenity of mind and tranquillity of heart. It banishes all gloomy doubts, suspicions and despondences; removes all craft, deceit and artifice; and gives the soul a blest simplicity of spirit, but a simplicity which far exceeds the wisdom of the earthly wise, and to the prudence of the serpent, adds a dove-like innocence. It silences the noisy passions; quiets the disorderly tumults of fleshly affections; and, suppressing all extravagance of desire or attach-

* Chap. iv.

ments entertains an ineffable contentment in the breast it takes possession of. It is the parent of love, but of a love all pure, all chaste, all heavenly: It is the sister of charity: And the sweet effect of that triumphing grace, which, through the divine assistance join'd with our free co-operation, leads us on to victory in the rude war we are engaged in with the world, the devil and our flesh.

It is a maxim of philosophers, and a very just one, that the same principle which is the cause of motion, is the cause of quiet. The heart of man then, which is under God the prime agent of every motion within him, must also be the first principle of his rest. The heart alone is capable of giving rest to the members it has set in motion: Sole arbiter of our pain or pleasure, the heart has the power at discretion to afford us peace or war. The peace which, terminating superficially on the countenance, penetrates not to the inmost foldings of the heart, is but a mere deceitful mask of peace. It is nearly a-kin to those unrefreshing slumbers which the sick are oftentimes reduced to court, from the foreign assistance of soporiferous draughts: Which, for want of those refreshing recruits of vigour which the dispirited brain is wont to receive from the moistening effluvia of the stomach; instead of comforting it, serve only to tantalize, teize and enervate it the more. Christian peace will always insinuate itself to the very center of the heart of every man whom it affects: And brightening it, filling it, and leaving within no want ungratified, no one desire unfulfill'd, will thence diffuse itself to every feature, through every pore. Ah! Let but the dissimulation of affected peace be taken-off from all those smiling countenances which seem (and only seem) so enviously serene: And how soon shall we not see that the peace of worldlings is a peace and no peace! How soon shall we be fully convinced, that, since all external quiet which flows not from a true serenity of heart is but a modish lye, a deluding counterfeit of peace; true peace of heart is no where to be sought or found but in a serious, zealous, firm adherence to the will of God!

To see a *Persian* monarch amidst his nobles, gayly seated at a splendid entertainment, smiling, laughing, playing, jesting, sporting and exciting mirth in all the cheerful company around him, who would not think him in possession of a perfect peace of heart? But! Is he so? Not at all: His peace is all grimace, mere show, rank affectation all. Three words unknown to him written on the wall is full enough to change this glittering scene of mirth into a fit of spleen, despondency and horror. * And can it be? Can it? Yes, it can be: It has been.

Ah! True is it, very true, that all the smiles of fortune, the power, riches, greatness, splendor

* Daniel v.

and

and pleasures of this world are merely outward; sit tottering on the superficial margin of the sense; and never gain admittance to the heart of man; which is by nature too capacious to be fill'd with aught but boundless happiness: And therefore cannot feel from those mere counterfeited joys any thing above the tantalizing sense of what it wants, the sense of wanting that sole satiating bliss which will not couple with it's counterfeit. The bliss then, the peace which should be only sought, and can be only found in GOD, is the only content which can procure an entrance into human hearts. This indeed not only enters but replenishes the soul; not only fills it but dilates it; not only dilates it but absorbs it. And while the fickle, empty, false, deluding peace of worldlings toys but about the outmost surface; this steals to the very center and takes a free possession of the whole.

Ah Christians! If then, as it appears and as the experienced St. *Augustin* says, "They, whose peace and happiness is centered in truth and not in the lye of earthly vanity, are partakers of the very felicity of GOD;" Who can doubt but,---who but must conclude,---that the true Christian, who after the example of his divine master spurns at, renounces and tramples on the false peace and joys of the world, must enjoy a plentiful, endless ocean of every pure unpall'd delight? Ah my GOD! It is even so: After all, great and unspeakable are the transporting sweets which thou art wont to deal to those souls who seek their peace alone in loving thee. So great is it, so ineffable, that, as an angelic Father of thy Church teaches, the joys dispensed by thy liberal hand, to the blessed souls who serve thee upon earth, are a foretaste, nay a portion, of those extatic delights which the blessed enjoy who triumph in the love of thee amidst the glory of Heaven. Ah! Well then might the transported Psalmist cry-out, after a taste of this anticipated beatitude: *O how great is the multitude of thy sweetness, which thou hast bidden for those who fear thee!* * O sweetness indeed surpass-

* Psalm xxx.

sing every sweet! O precious property of those who seek their peace in GOD: Not only to gather in the flower of their hopes, the promises of fruit, but the very budding fruit itself!

What shall I say to you, Christians? In the delight which GOD transfuses into the souls of those who fix their peace in him, he not only consoles them with the solid hopes of a fair paradise in reversion, but even feeds them with the first fruits of beatitude in a paradise already began. Will you then, after all, be such traitors to your own interests as to renounce a sea of unutterable real delight to quench your thirst with a few muddy drops of fancied satisfaction? Nay, to drown yourselves in an oozy puddle of corrupted corrupting pleasures? Where is the wretch so senseless, who, thirsting after plenty of refreshment, would renounce a fountain for a drop? No where: no where, says St. *Augustin*: "No-one prefers a drop to a fountain." Why then, beloved, should you be so treacherous to yourselves, you who are so indefatigably eager for peace, as, for the sake of a few mere drops of false, precarious, dangerous content to renounce an eternal spring of true and certain peace and safety, bliss and glory?

If you wish for peace in earnest; seek it where it may be found. Seek it not in avarice, ambition, luxury, sin and folly: For, *there is no peace for the wicked, says the Lord*. No, seek it in GOD and you shall find it. Seek it in believing, serving, loving and obeying him. Seek it in Christ, who is our peace itself. To conclude, seek not the peace of the flesh, the peace of senses: But seek that peace, which JESUS this day gives to his disciples, and gives, through them, to you, in this consoling gospel: *Peace be to you*: A peace which infinitely transcends that which the flesh, the world and senses have to give. I therefore, in my Saviour's name, shall once more recommend it to you. *And may the peace of GOD, which surpasseth every sense, keep your hearts and intelligences in CHRIST JESUS*: I beseech, &c. In the name, &c.

S E R M O N

On the Second SUNDAY after EASTER.

St. JOHN, x. 22.

*The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep:
But the hireling, whose own the sheep are not,
seeth the wolf coming and leaveth the sheep and
fleeth.*

THERE are then hirelings in the Church of GOD?--Yes: It cannot be denied: There are too many by the whole number. Yet, thanks to thee, all gracious Spouse and ruler of thy Church, that number is but small compared to the good shepherds.

shepherds thou has't given to it. And you, O Catholics, have reason to return your Saviour thanks, this day, for giving you the marks to know them by asunder. But then yours will be all the blame henceforth; if you mistake in your discernment, after so lively a description as he has given you of both, *The good shepherd*, your Saviour tells you, *gives-up his life for his flock. The hireling gives-up the lives of his flock for himself.* The former, wholly intent to feed and cherish his sheep, breathes only for them: His time, his toils, his thoughts, his health, his very relaxations, nay his life, are all devoted to their safety. While on the contrary, the latter attentive to their fleece alone, pampers them only to destruction; and, finish'd-traitor-like, cherishes and soothes them only with the bait of ruin, as fatted victims destin'd to fall a sacrifice, when time shall serve, to his own selfish purposes. And therefore is he ever ready to desert and leave them on the unguard, the moment danger seems to perk him in the face. Now such as these, few as they are, there must be. For *it is necessary*, says Christ, *that scandals should come*: Though *woe to him by whom scandal cometh.* Yes: Scandals are necessary that *the elect may be made manifest*, by persevering in their fidelity amidst such fiery trials.

That some offences are given them by heedless pastors to the laity is undeniable: But then, let prejudice subside and truth take place, it will appear that many more offences are taken by the laity than are really given. Hence is the cause of so much disrespect in laymen to their clergy: And hence it is, that even the best of these gather so little fruit from all their zeal and labour for the good of those. O Christians! inconsiderate Christians! you, who are so easily and often scandalized at priests, search but the source of your disgusts, and you will find that scandal taken is not always scandal given. Be honest to yourselves as well as to them; and you'll be forced to own, that ninety-nine at least of every hundred scandals which you take at them, owe their beginning to some corruption in your heads or hearts. This is a truth I have long proposed to lay before you, for your sakes more than theirs. And no time fairer than the present, when the gospel of the day invites you to adhere to the good shepherd, and cautions you to avoid the hireling. For, if, heedless of the instructions which it gives you to discern them, each from the other, you blend them with a like contempt; what benefit can you reap from either? Whereas, with proper circumspection, you have it in your power to render both of sovereign use to you.

To convince you then, Beloved, that I say no more than I can prove, I shall now proceed to consider four very material points yet unconsider'd with regard to the priesthood:

- I. The causes in general of the many scandals taken by the laity at their Pastors:
- II. The danger of being easily scandalized at your pastors:
- III. The advantages of not being easily scandalized at them: And
- IV. The means of reaping benefit even from such pastors as may give you but too much room for taking scandal.

“O Thou inspirer of all truth! Direct this tongue to utter the bold maxims of thy own dictating, and utter them without offence and without fervid fear of giving it. Open the minds and hearts of this mistaken people to take in Christian part the doctrines which thou bid'st me preach. And O! forbid the infernal enemy to overspread the salutary seed, which I shall sow, with the pernicious cockle of a false construction.”

I. Could I consent to act the hireling; had I my own tranquillity in view, regardless of your safety; I should rather soothe you in the dangerous dream you are in, than attempt to awake you from so profound a sleep, at the hazard of being crush'd by the unreasonable resentment of some of you. What concern is it of a man's, who lives by you, who is honour'd by you, nay indulged by you; or what ends can he propose to himself in directing you, how you should behave with regard to others. So says worldly prudence: So says that craft, which your mistaken prepossession is so often apt to pay your pastors the compliment of. But what say you O honestly and truth? What say'st thou, my God? Can the faithful pastor leave his people a prey to dangerous sleep, and see the enemy, man, sowing the tares of prejudice amidst their pasture? Can a good Shepherd leave his flock a prey to the devouring wolf for fear of rousing them, tho' at the peril of their peevishness? No, no: Thou has't said, and it must be so, *The good Shepherd gives up his Life for his Sheep.* O make me then a truly faithful Shepherd! Rather let me, at this altar, resign my useless breath, than live to leave this flock of thine a prey to fatal prejudice, through any dastard fear of their displeasure. Rather than live to be a hireling, let me expire, while yet a pastor in my wishes. For ah my God! how shall I act the pastor now? How shall I treat a sore so tender? How shall I act to remove one scandal and not leave a greater? Let me then plead with *Jeremiah. Ab! ab! ab! O Lord God! Behold I cannot speak; for I am a Child in human wisdom.* What say'st Thou, Lord? Say not I am a Child: for to all things, to which I shall send thee, thou shalt go: And all things whatsoever I shall command thee, Thou shalt speak. * But to what purpose, Lord; if false pre-

* 2 Jerem. i.

vention

vention should interfere to misapply my words? For behold Lord, I am less than a child in the eyes of modern Christians; a Priest, a man who by his function is imbibed with craft. No matter: *Be not afraid of their face, because I am with thee to deliver thee.* † But ah! Once more, my God: If thou deliver me, how shall I deliver them? What weight can my words have to remove their disaffection to their pastors, when I myself am one; and therefore seemingly concern'd in the advice I give? But how, my heart, art thou concern'd? Thou art supported, nay honour'd by them beyond what thou can'st merit? Thou then art quite unconcern'd on any side. Go then, says the Lord: (methinks) *Behold I have this day appointed thee over the Gentils and over kingdoms, that thou may'st pluck-up and destroy, and waste and dissipate and build and plant.* †

Look ye then, Christians: To reap benefit from what I shall say in my following discourse, you must have recourse to abstraction. Try therefore to forget a-while the man in the preacher, the friend in the missionary, and the sinner in the shepherd. Imagine not, that you are listening to the person, who has visited you at your houses; eaten and drank at your tables; smiled and been cheerful with some of you; wept and being mournful with others; and studied to be all to all of you. Think not, in a word, that you are hearing the man who wants preaching to as much as any of you, but rather that you are hearing a prophet; nay, more than a prophet, a disciple of Christ, a priest and apostle; nay, more than all, Christ himself. For *he who hears you, hears me*, says Christ to the meanest of us all. And this I promise you: I will say nothing to you but what I have a warrant for from him, and what He-himself would confirm, if visibly upon earth. To proceed then:

One capital vulgar error which I observe to run through all considerations in life, is the ungenerous imputation of evils in particulars, to general corruption; while the excellencies of the whole are only imputed to the merit of some certain particulars. Let any single limb in a man be disorder'd, the whole body is said to be out of order; when perhaps the rest of the members have no other share in the evil than compassion creates. But when is the health of a person ever imputed to more than the faithful performance of their functions in the several members. No, we are always ingenious in propagating ungenerous inferences: Would we were so in the reverse! Let a body of men excel ever-so in commendable pursuits, we forget the praises due to their conjunction, and only remember to refund the general merit into the excellencies of the individuals of which that body is composed. But no

* Jerem. i. † *Ibid.*

sooner does one of those individuals degenerate from the virtues of the rest, than the whole is made accountable for what the whole disapproves and condemns. Thus let the majority of priests, adhering to that sanctity which their function dictates and inspires them with, give ever such edifying proofs of their virtue and zeal; what honour does all their piety reflect to the priesthood? None in the least. It is not the priesthood you reverence as pious, but the men. In short, they are not good men, because they are priests: But the men are good and therefore act well, tho' priests. But let one of those priests, whom you esteem as good men, appear to be otherwise; The scene is immediately reversed. The whole priesthood is contemn'd for one evil or indiscreet man, who has intruded into, or misbehaved in it; and it is not because he was a sinful man, that he has acted amiss; but because he was a priest. O ungenerous, uncharitable, unchristian inference! Nay, unjust and cryingly unjust I may call it. For surely, if the eminent worth of the majority of priests may not reflect honour to the function in general; how merciless an injustice is it not to load it with the contempt due to the ill-conduct of a few? And yet how general a practice is not this, with the Christians of our age! What wonder is it then, that so many, unjustly scandalized at their good shepherds, for the misbehaviour of hirelings, either fall from the Church into schism and heresy, or live in it with unprofitable lukewarmness? How should it be otherwise, when, as the prophet foretold, *The face of our Lord hath divided them, he will not add to regard them:* Because *they have not revered the faces of his priests?* *

The generality of the laity, with regard to their pastors, either wholly forget the man or wholly forget the priest. If they take a whimsical liking to one, they immediately raise him in their imagination to an angel, to a creature impeccable, confirm'd in grace; nay more, a something without temptations and even without passions; and, forgetting the man in the priest, either cringe him into vanity, or feed him into avarice, or court him into levity; and therefore is it, that, when the frailty of his nature ever so little undeceives them, all their former exorbitant esteem sinks into as unjust a contempt: Every little foible of his is magnified into a real fault: And his most inoffensive words and actions are made a matter of scandal. Whereas, would they but remember the man as well as the priest; they must expect to discover foibles in him, and those foibles would not lessen that esteem which alone can render him of use to them. Because they would naturally reflect, that God chose not for their pastors angels, but men; and sinful men: Men, who, from the frailty of their own nature, from the stubbornness

* *Jerem. Lament. iv.*

of their own passions, and the refractoriness of their own tempers, might learn to compassion the weaknesses of their flock.

If they remember'd the man as well as the priest; they would remember to apply to him not only when they want his spiritual assistance, but even when he wants their temporal aid. They would remember, that *Every labourer is worthy of his hire*; and he, who has no subsistence but from the altar, ought to live by the altar. And yet how many worthy priests are there not probably now starving in this great city; who, perhaps, take more pains than I and some others who are better subsisted! And what can this be attributed to, but to the uncharitable prejudices of some of the laity, even such as want neither the purse nor the soul to give charity. "A worthy pastor in want! Is it possible?" "But why don't he make his case known?" Alas Christians! There lies his misfortune. He is reduced to suffer, because he mayn't speak: And he may not speak, lest he should be reduced to suffer more. "But how then shall we relieve him; if he does not speak?" And how shall he support his dignity; if he does? What do those get, who reveal their wants to you, but the character and contempt of mercenary hirelings? If a priest be a real hireling; and yet artful enough to cloke his mercenary broad-hints with the flimsy cover of an affected disinterestedness; how ready are all to glut his avarice with profusion! But let the good shepherd, with honest openness, declare a necessity; how is he branded with the title of mercenary, of hireling, of beggar? In short, the major part of Christians are fondly blind to the most glaring objects and clear-sighted only to misapprehension. They cherish the dust in their eyes, not to observe the mercenary, who serves them only for what he can get, and only while getting it. But see double, when they behold the pastor, whose disinterested care is the only cause which reduces him to sue to them for assistance. Their pastor must be ever at their beckon, or he neglects them; no pains he takes is thought supererogatory. No: All is his duty; and it is well, if, after doing all for them, he is thought to have fulfill'd his duty. But when is it ever thought by them a duty to make any temporal return to his spiritual assistance? If, generously regardless of himself, he discovers no wants; but, trusting wholly to their bounty to prevent them, he applies wholly to deserving that bounty by his assiduity for their good; they suppose him rich, or pronounce him proud, and devote him to all the hardships of the most ungenerous neglect. What wonder then is it; if such a man is too frail by nature to withstand the rudest shocks of a severe penury? What wonder, *I say*, is it to see him fall into such meannesses as must be degrading to the dignity of a

Pastor, offensive to his flock and disgraceful to the Church in general? But whose is the chief fault? The Priest's, whose natural disposition perhaps is diametrically opposed to such meannesses; or yours, in urging him to such an extremity by your neglect? If all the mischief lay in the disgrace of the Priest; the evil would not be so great, but it might be repair'd. It has been necessary, and therefore might be again, *for one Man*, to bleed, *to die for the people*. The ease, the credit, the safety, the life of a Priest is not much. Let him be a sacrifice to the utmost distress; could any benefit accrue from it. But why give-up a Priest, who still is a man and invested with all the weaknesses of a man? Why, *I say*, give him up to the trial of want, a trial which requires the heroism of a something more than man to resist? Especially when he cannot fall into any evil without dragging legions after him. And how shall you prevent his falling a prey to the temptation of want, but by preventing his necessities before he asks you? For if you wait till he asks you; you may wait till too late. Ask you he may not, lest you think him mercenary. What then has he to do? Steal or circumvent? That would be a double crime in him. Shall he work? That would equally offend this nicer age. Which of you all would forbear being scandalized; if a director of yours, following the example of *St. Paul*, and earning his bread at the sweat of his brow the better to preach the gospel freely to you, should turn tent-maker, taylor, shoe-maker, or what you please? How then shall he be preserved from want or the temptations incident to it, but by your generous assistance before he asks or even hints a want of it? And yet how few are there generous enough to reflect on this? And to such neglects we may impute a great part of the scandals which happen to the laity from the weaker part of the priesthood. I say not this for any of this flock; but for those of any others, who may be here by chance. For 'tis with pleasure I reflect, more for your sakes than my own, on that cheerful generosity which renders you above any reproaches of this sort: Since if your Pastors have any room for complaints against you; it is rather for your tenderness to them than any neglect of them. But let the wanderers here present lay their hands on their hearts and say: Which of them all give their Pastors occasion to lay the like to them with any truth? Which of them all ever thinks of a Pastor's support, so far from actually providing for it? In short, Christians of mine I hope, I may say this without suspicion of flattery: Were all Christians as generous to their shepherds as you are to yours; all shepherds (it is to be hoped) would exceed, at least one of yours, in merit. There would not so many fall from the Church, nor so many of those, who remain in it, live remissly as they do.

But

But the menace of God, by the mouth of his prophet, is verified in them: *The face of our Lord hath divided them, He will not add to regard them: Because they have not revered the faces of his Priests.*

Another grand source, as I have already hinted to you, of many of the scandals you receive from your pastors, is the forgetting the priest in the man. You either dislike the man, and therefore neglect the Priest, or else you take a fancy to the man, and carry your liking to the prostitution of his dignity. If yourselves were in want; you would soon remember the Priest as well as the man, and recur to him for relief, whether you liked his personal qualities or not: Nay whether he had it or not, you would be scandalized; if he did not relieve you. For the poor will never believe but a priest, if he is not half-naked, is rich. And yet how backward are you, in affluence, of putting it in the power of your pastors to relieve such of you as are or may be necessitous? A priest is call'd to the spiritual assistance of a sick person, whose greatest distemper, perhaps, is the most starveling poverty; and who is wasting by inches for want of nourishment. How can a priest, in such a case, which happens but daily; how can he, if he has a shilling in the world, and is not flinted into cruelty, refuse to part with it to redeem a perishing neighbour from immediate death? And yet if he has it not; he cannot give it. Still if he does not give it; how ready are the standers-by to be scandalized, and load him, behind his back, with the epithets of covetous, uncharitable, nay cruel? When perhaps he feels for him but too much; feels it in the straitness of his own circumstance; feels it in a sympathetic compassion for his penitent; and feels it in the bitter reflection on the ungenerous neglect of his own flock, which puts it not in his power to relieve the needy among them. And therefore is it but too often that many are offended by phantoms in the priesthood: Phantoms of their own raising. And therefore is it, that *the face of our Lord hath divided so many of them, and will not add to regard them: Because they have forgotten the priest in the man: In a word, because they have not revered the faces of his priests.*

But some of you mistakenly fancy, you reverence his priests; when, perhaps, 'tis not the priest but the man you reverence. You take a fancy to a man and forget his function, so far as oftentimes to tempt him to forget it too. In short, if you are pleased to have a good opinion of our abilities; You first draw us into the forfeiture of our character, by engaging us to intermeddle in your affairs: and then blame us for it when you have done. So Satan first tempts man to sin; and then becomes his accuser: You are never at rest, or never let us be

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so; till we enter into your secular intrigues: Which if we miscarry in; you will be scandalized; And if we succeed; you must be so. If, through ignorance of the world and it's deceits, we mismanage your interests; you impute it in us to want of sense, or want of honour: And the priests, *you cry*, have undone you. On the other hand, if any of us are artful enough to out-shuttle a shuffling world in your behalf; how can you well avoid being scandalized at the very service we do you: When it suits so illy with that simplicity, which ought to be inseparable from the holy character of priesthood God has invested us with; to be more, infinitely more, serviceable to you in a very different capacity? Is it not dearly buying scandal then, at the hazard of our salvation and your own, to drag us from our studies to the exchange; from the altar to the bar, the commons, or the tavern? What have priests to do with patching-up of bargains? Making-up of matches? Managing estates? Or directing the temporal concerns of families? When a treaty of commerce depends on a critical point, which you know not how to settle without injuring yourselves or injuring others; apply to the priest to learn what religious equity requires. When parties are agreed, and all things are right; apply to the priest for the Church's blessing on your nuptials. When your estate wants retrieving, and you know not where to begin, without offending against justice or charity; seek advice from God's minister. If strife and misunderstanding disturb the Christian tranquillity of your family; perhaps the authority and prudence of a good and judicious priest may restore it to harmony, when nothing else can: And, in such cases, the good offices of your pastor may be as serviceable as they are charitable. But to interrupt his business of prayer and sacred studies, his affairs of the altar and other sacerdotal duties, to make him a party in the temporal management of any of these; is as sacrilegious a profanation of religious decorum, as the buying and selling in the midst of God's temples: The only crime against which our meek-spirited master Christ was known to exert his wrath openly. To speak plainly the inviting priests to bear a part in matters so foreign to their function, can proceed from nothing but a sovereign scorn for the priesthood. And therefore is it, that there has seldom happen'd a scandal, on such an occasion, but what has been attended as much with ruin to the laity, who have decoy'd him, as with contempt to the unwary priest, who has suffer'd himself to be decoy'd into it. And what wonder is it? For *the face of the Lord hath divided them, he will not add to regard them, Because they have forgotten the priest in the man; because, in a word, they have not revered the faces of his priests.*

E e

I know, Christians, some of you will tell me: If a priest did not like the office; you would not put it upon him. But if he really does shew you a liking to it; so much the less wise are you to employ him in it: And if he does not; it is barbarous to teize him to it. If he shews a forwardness for it; what can he be but a hireling? What motive can he have but fordid lucre, to neglect his real office for one foreign to his sphere? Yet what reason can you have to think he likes the office? Since, if you did not make him the first advance; if you did not court, nay teize him to it; where is the priest who would have the courage, not to say confidence, to intrude himself into your temporal affairs? But it is in this, as in most of the offences you take at your pastors: The scandal is chiefly owing to the corruption of heart in the persons scandalized. With regard to priests, it is almost universally true, as *Aristotle* says, "Every man judges as he himself is affected." the lay-man, who cannot be familiar without being impudent, charges every priest with boldness, who is ever so modestly open and free. Another, who is never reserved but with craft and design, calls every priest sly, who is modest and bashful. From the same corrupted springs proceed innumerable mistakes of his conduct. If he is grave; he is morose or out of temper: If cheerful: he must needs be thought dissolute: If he talks of common things; he is call'd worldly: And if he variegates conversation with a few maxims of piety; he is a cant. For Heaven's sake, Christians, either cease to be scandalized so easily yourselves, or cease to furnish your own matter. Either take your pastors such as God sends them to you, priests and yet frail men; or agree among yourselves on your own model of a perfect priest: And if it be consistent with God's honour and your own good; I dare answer, that all good shepherds will study as much as possible to become such. But how is it possible for any priest to content you all; when every-one is so industrious to idolize a scandal of his own? When we visit you often; we lose your respect: Forgetful of the priest who visits you for your soul's sake, you mind only the man; and think we visit you for our own ends. If we visit you but seldom; remembering the man, you think we neglect you: Still forgetting that, as priests, if we attend the sick and our own studies; we can have but little time to spare for idle or unnecessary visits.

For want of reflecting on this, when you invite a priest to your table, tho' in ever so cool a manner, and he comes not; how ready are you to impute it to neglect or contempt of you? to haughtiness, pique or something worse? And yet let him come but once uninvited, or let him indiscreetly come as often as you invite him; and how probably may he find the words of St. *Jerome* true, that "the priest,

"who never refuses an invitation, will soon sink into the contempt of his host?" There are but two sorts of persons, with whom a priest can dine: The poor and the rich. With the poor, it is barbarous to dine; and with the rich it is dangerous. A poor man will oftener ask his pastor to his table than a rich man; and generally with a heart full of sincerity. Nay what is more, in spite of all the priest can say to the contrary, shall lavish a week's income to entertain him, the want of which must make himself even suffer for a whole week. But then surely it would be barbarous in a priest knowingly to accept invitations from such? For if he does he must ruin his host.--- And yet if he does not; he is censured as proud, above him, and I know not what. Still is it better to be censured unjustly than deserve censure. And therefore, when a priest does think it right to dine with a friend; the safer way is to dine with those whom he cannot hurt. Tho' even with the rich there is danger: Danger of losing the esteem necessary to do them good, through their mistaking him: Danger of copying their manners: And danger of being thought to prefer the rich to the poor, if he eats often with the former. And if he does not; how liable is he not to be censured! Tho' still, I say, it is much better to suffer censure than deserve it: And therefore the safest way for every priest, is, in my private opinion, neither to dine nor visit, but when and where he may do good; where he is either wanted or wish'd for; and where this truth is believed: That a minister of God does the peasant or the prince he condescends to visit more honour than he can receive. And this a priest may inviolably practise without departing in the least from that mean opinion of himself which every Christian, and much more ecclesiastics, ought to cultivate; if he takes but due care to steer between the odious extremes of meanness and arrogance; if, in short, while he is ready to submit his person to the lowliest offices of fraternal charity in consideration of his own littleness, he is still mindful enough of the dignity of his function, never to stoop to any pitiful complacences which may bring his holy character into contempt.

You see, Christians, I speak very frankly; and as your own good, more than that of your pastors, is concern'd in the subject. I am treating, I think it my duty to be quite ingenuous. Be pleased or displeased with what I say; provided you mistake not my meaning. I would fain persuade Christians to throw aside their pernicious jealousies of priests; to shake-off that perversity, which makes them see the actions of their pastors in a false injurious light; and which may incline them even now, perhaps, to construe all I say to some self-pointed view, or odious reflection. But thou, O searcher of all hearts, who bid'st me utter this important doctrine, knowest how much

much my soul detests such prostitutions of thy holy word!

II. What I have hitherto said then, Christians, was only with the intent to convince you, that the major part of the scandals you take at your pastors, proceed from some mistake in your own judgment, or some lurking perversity in your wills: *That is, in short*, the corruption of your own heads or hearts are the chief causes of them. And yet I do not pretend to say, there are no scandalous priests. Would to Heaven, I could with any reason even think there are none! But then, how small would you find the number, to what you make it in your mistaken notions; were you all as slow to believe amiss of them, as you are to credit any good of them? Let any extraordinary good be spoken of a priest; how loth are you to credit it without the most indisputable authority? Bare Circumstances will not do: You must have ocular demonstration; or you will not venture to believe it. And yet the most trivial circumstances shall suffice to induce you to fix the blackest guilt upon your pastors; every slighting or scandalous tale is immediately swallow'd for gospel truth, and you require no character of the person, who spoke the scandal: 'Tis sufficient that he speak against a priest, for the most notorious liar, libertin, or profligate to gain credit; tho' he be an enemy to the priests he belies, tho' he be enemy to the priesthood, nay to religion in general: It is known by experience, that the major part of retailers of scandal, against priests are a set of wretches, whose word, if their actions were publicly known, would pass in no court to condemn or even lessen the worth of the meanest creature in the creation. Yet how often do you take the character of priests from such hands? Nay now a-days the reputation of every priest lies at the mercy of every heretic, jew, or infidel; notwithstanding the known pleasure, which these frequently and maliciously take in calumniating them; and notwithstanding that the gravest fathers of the Church (and particularly St. *Augustin*) insist that the accusation of heretics, tho' ever so many, neither can nor ought to have any weight with good Catholics against a priest. How many of the most deserving pastors in God's Church have innocently bled in their good name, by the inveterate enemies of religion? And if every priest is not totally defamed by the heretics who know him; (to the shame of some of us be it spoken) it is, I fear, more owing to their generosity in not belying him, than to our charity in discrediting any lies they can or could invent. Why then do we wonder that so many from among us, deserting the standard of Christ's cross, fall into heresy and infidelity? Why are we astonish'd, that, among those who remain with us, there is so little piety, and so much irregularity: When as the pro-

phet foretold, *the face of our Lord hath divided them, he will not add to regard them*: Because *they have not revered the faces of his priests*.

Beware then, Christians, O beware how you suffer yourselves to give into such ungenerous treatment of your pastors. Remember, however weak they are, they are the ministers of God, and God *has chosen the weak things of this world to confound the strong*. Be not then easy to take offence at them: Nor add your own weakness to their frailty, to render them useless. Reflect on the dangers which such a conduct exposes you to. It is the priest himself who is to answer for his own conduct; not you. However imperfect his private life may be; if he performs the duties of his public function to you; his authority is the same, his commission is from God, and you may reap all the advantages from him, which a minister of God is capable of yielding to you, excepting good example. And they are not sent to you chiefly for example; but to instruct you and point-out to you a nobler example than they can give, your Saviour Christ. Whether, they follow him or not; once they point him out to you, you are obliged to follow *him* not *them*. Why then will you solicit your own ruin, by losing sight of Christ, to pry into the steps of those, who point-out to you the road to him. This you are sure of, that, if you miss of him, your ruin is inevitable; nay irreparable. And how can you avoid missing of him; when, neglectful of the way to him, your thoughts are wholly bent on following the ways of a man, who, tho' he directs you right, is perhaps going wrong himself. But whether he is or not, if you think him so; the consequence to you will be the same. For once you conceive an ill opinion of your guide, your confidence in his advice will vanish; and therefore, mistrusting his knowledge or sincerity, you'll steer out of meer perversity, a different road from that he points-out to you. Or else, becoming your own guides, you'll turn your backs on Heaven; and, following the high way of liberty and pleasure which your passions strew, you'll steer head-long to ruin. There is nothing more natural to us, tho' nothing more weak than the despising the best of advice of a man, who does not follow his own counsel, or is not thought to do so. Whereas the advice is still the same, both good and profitable, whether practised by the giver, or neglected. However, as it is the favourite study of the devil, to turn all our foibles to our destruction, one fatal artifice by which he draws whole legions of souls to perdition, is to destroy their confidence in their spiritual pastors. The first step he takes is to make a man judge rashly of the most innocent actions of a priest. If he consents to that; next he pronounces him guilty, then comparing his imaginary faults with the perfection he

teaches, he discredits his doctrine. The same corruption of mind and heart, which makes him think ill of one, teaches him to think amiss at last of all he knows. No sooner has he thrown-off a necessary respect for God's ministers, than he begins to think religion a meer jest, the craft of priests, a bug-bear to keep fools in awe. From thoughts he soon proceeds to words and actions suitable; sets God and virtue at defiance; gives vice the reins, and sinks the miserable dupe of his ungenerous rashness. But here the mischief does not end: Not content, with being thus wicked alone, he seldom fails to use his utmost arts, to draw unwary souls into his basest notions of their pastors; that stript of all their counsels and assistance, he may the more effectually ensnare them. Thus do such wretches finally become the active tools of hell, to be it's prey at last. Thus the judgment of the Almighty justly infatuates them, when his grace, through their own perverse rashness has deserted them. And thus is the vengeance of God, foretold by *Jeremiah*, terribly fulfill'd in them. *The face of our Lord hath divided them, He will not add to regard them, because they have not revered the faces of his priests.*

What is it which has so often rent the Church of God with schisms? What is it which has given birth to so many pernicious and detestable heresies? What usher'd into this land so much ignorance, error, infidelity and debauchery? What still cherishes indecision, nay immorality, among the faithful sheep, whom Christ still reserves within his fold of this kingdom? May we not, if we run to the fountain-head, impute all these disorders to the jealousies, mistrusts, grudges, rash-judgments and disrespectts, which our ancestors entertain'd, and we after their example still entertain, of our lawful shepherds? Why are we deaf to their counsels? Why are we so obstinately imperfect, while they take so much pains to make us perfect? Why --- but because we lose the respect due to them by imputing the misconduct of a few hirelings to the fault of the greater, far greater, number of good shepherds? Why --- but because we neglect the man in the priest; slight or prostitute the priest in the man; put the worst constructions on the most innocent actions of the best of them; ungenerously colour the purest intentions with such tinctures as are drawn merely from the corruption of our own heads and hearts; and finally trust their good names (so necessary for the good of souls) to the mercy of their enemies, of libertins, nay, of infidels: Much readier to take, from such, a bad character of them, than a good-one from the most unexceptionable evidence?

III. But after all you'll say: "What a deal of rout is here about these priests? What a deal of nicety is required to make them useful? Surely

"they are very ticklish beings; if it requires so much circumspection not to offend them? What must we do then? Are we to approach them, as some heathens do their Idols, with veils over our eyes? Or are we to consider them, as angels, void of every fault?" No, Christians: I would not have you consider them as angels, but as men; nay as frail men; nay as sinful men. But then I would not have you be sinners, because they are such. I would not have you endeavour to be blind to their foibles, for fear of offending them: But I would have you less ready to see double with regard to them, for fear of doing damage to yourselves. If you think ill of them; you will think but lightly of their doctrine: And once you condemn the saving documents of Christian truth, what profit can you reap from it's dispensers? If these then become useless to you; whither will you have recourse for the means of salvation? God thought not fit to make you the judges over yourselves; but has appointed priests to be his ministers to you, and made them your guides and pastors, nay judges between himself and you. He has placed them over you, in his stead, with full commissions and authority to cherish, feed, and lead you to salvation by dispensing his mysteries to you. So let man esteem us, says St. PAUL, * in the name of the priesthood, *So let man esteem us as ministers of Christ and dispensers of the mysteries of God.* And in quality of such it is, that Christ says to his priesthood: *He, who bears you, bears me; and he, who despises you, despises me.*

Here then is a positive injunction laid upon you to hear your pastors as you would hear Christ himself, and to hear them without any degree of contempt. Here is an express declaration, that every contempt of them or of their doctrine for their sake, is a contempt shewn to Christ and to his doctrine. Yet how shall you avoid having contempt for such of them as you take scandal from? Surely then your salvation must be greatly at stake, in every offence you take at your pastors, whether right or wrong: In-as-much-as it must more or less diminish your attention to their doctrine, and even to their best advice; and therefore destroy the advantages which they are sent to afford you. It cannot then but be considerably more your interest than theirs, that you endeavour to entertain the kindest and most charitable opinion of them you are able to conceive, whether they be wholly worthy of it or not. But let us get forward and see --- What are the advantages we may procure from thinking favourably of our spiritual guides.

In the first place then: While a pastor is in possession of the good esteem of his flock, his spiritual advice will have all it's due weight with them: They will take what he says in good part; and will

1 Cor. iv.

endeavour

endeavour to reach the perfection he teaches them. And if all do not immediately break with vice and give themselves up to virtue; yet some will do it: The stronger will buoy-up the weaker, and all, at length, will help each-other to attain, if not the summit of perfection, at least the state of sanctifying grace and virtuous struggle towards it. Thus will the esteem of every Christian flock for it's pastor, go hand in hand with all his labours for their spiritual good. If he deserves it not with regard to his private life, the fruitful success of his endeavours will pique him probably to deserve it. And, if he does deserve their good opinion of him, the same success will spur him to deserve it more and more.

Priests, though they are priests, are men. And in the very worst of men there is a pride which prompts them often to blush at the esteem their conscious guilt declares them undeserving of. Nor is this pride to be considered as a vice, but rather as the seed of virtue lent them by Heaven to rouse their sleeping souls to merit the esteem they feel such pleasure in possessing. Though then, at first, the labours of a quite imperfect pastor may be the fruits of mere vain-glory; yet, if the esteem his flock has for him should crown those labours with success, 'tis highly probable, that grace will at last mould his former vanity into real zeal. He'll blush to see his flock improve in virtues, which he only knows in theory; and will, at length, push his preaching into practice. Nay, let a pastor's vigilance and labours for his flock be ever so piously intended, let him be warm'd with ever so sincere a zeal; he'll feel sometimes the man, and will be apt to flagg: But if the good esteem of those he has the care of second his zeal; the prosperous prospect of his labours will rouse his nodding virtue with the spur of laudable ambition, or rather let me call it *emulation*. He'll be ashamed of being excell'd by any of his sheep. And loth to let one enter Heaven before him, he'll push-on towards it, at their head, and grow a perfect saint, in trying to make, them such, not only by his doctrine, but by his example. Thus, Christians, is it in the power of every Christian flock to save their own souls and their pastor's too, by cherishing their favourable esteem of him, and not suffering themselves, on light occasions, to be scandalized at his behaviour.

Again, another advantage which will attend upon these is, that, while you entertain a good opinion of your pastors, you will not only make them of sovereign use to themselves and to you, but even to others. Thinking well of a person, and speaking well of him are constant attendants; and public fame ever waits upon private esteem. If then you endeavour to cherish advantageous ideas of the merit of your pastor; it will naturally prompt you to

speaking his praise to those, who know him not, or know him but little. This will raise their curiosity to see and hear him; and the prepossession you have given them in favour of him will make them the more ready to listen to him without prejudice, and enable him to win them over with the greater ease to the doctrine of Christ and the unity of his Church. This is what our divine Lord himself hints to you in the Xth of St. John, *Other sheep I have, says he, who are not of this fold. Them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice: And there shall be made one fold and one shepherd.*

Such then are the eminent advantages of not being easily scandalized at your pastors: Such the great fruits of entertaining an esteem for them. You honour Christ by it; you become the happy instruments of promoting the salvation, perhaps, the perfection of your pastors themselves: You may be the happy means, under God, of uniting thousands of straying souls to the saving fold of Christ's Church. And, whether you are, or not; once you have done your part towards it, the same merit will be ascribed to you, by the all-rewarding goodness of God, as if it had really been so: And lastly, whether your pastor be perfect or imperfect; good or bad in his own private life; whether others follow the saving doctrine he teaches, or not; if your good opinion of him gives weight to his advice enough to induce you to follow it; you will, you must, be saved yourselves, nay lifted to perfection. All which advantages are lost and barter'd for the most eminent dangers to salvation, by being easy to take scandal at the shepherd, who is to feed and fit you for it.

IV. You will say, perhaps, beloved: "This would be glorious advice, and as easy to practice, as it is worthy of approbation; could we but keep our eyes always shut and our ears always stopt. But, that is impracticable to all but the deaf and blind. While the senses are awake to sensation; they will, they must, be affected by the objects which strike them. What else are they given us for? How then is it possible for us, while we have eyes to see, and ears to hear, to avoid being scandalized at such pastors as give us but too much room for taking scandal; by objecting to our eyes actions quite opposit to the virtues they preach; and by giving occasion for such reports as continually din our ears with matter for ideas very different from the esteem we should and would gladly entertain of them, if they would let us?" Why really, Christians, to speak the truth frankly, it is a very difficult matter to preserve a perfect esteem for such pastors, where this is really the case: Remember what I say, where this is really the case. But their diffi-

cult as this duty is, it is not impracticable; otherwise there could be no obligation to attempt it. And that we are under some obligation of entertaining all possible esteem for the most imperfect pastors, and putting the best construction on their actions; seems very evident. For, in the first place; the corruption of our nature ever prompts us to flight the soundest advices of a man, whom we view in a contemptible light. It is therefore morally impossible we should profit by the instructions of an imperfect pastor; if we are scandalized at him, as we certainly shall be, if we suffer ourselves to believe him such. And therefore the commandment of God to his people to hear their pastor, must virtually include a precept of esteeming them. Now such a commandment has Christ given to all Christians in these words: *He, who hears you, hears me; and he, who despises you, despises me:* A commandment which extends to all the flock in general, and excludes no pastor lawfully sent, and not yet recall'd by the Church.

The most imperfect of your pastors cannot be less respectable than the *Scribes* and the *Pharisees*, whose lives were evil, though their doctrines were good: And yet Christ, while their authority subsisted, expressly commanded the *Jews* to reverence their counsels, without paying any attention to their actions. *Upon the chair of Moses*, says he, *have sitten the Scribes and Pharisees:* * Yes, Lord, they are the successors of *Moses* and preach-up his doctrines: But then, as thou knowest and hast said, *they say and do not.* † How then shall we benefit by their counsels? "How? Why keep your attention fix'd to their dignity: They are still your lawful pastors. *All things therefore, whatsoever they shall say to you do ye; but according to their works do ye not.*" † Here then, Christians, is an express command to you to obey and revere the most imperfect of your pastors; as long as the Church upholds them in their office. Let us change but names, and the precept will appear to you in it's full force. *In the chair of Christ have sitten your pastors and priests:* "How shall we be sure of that, you'll say?" Why, take it from Christ himself for the greater certainty: Go, says he to them, *Go, behold I send you: He, who heareth you, heareth me; and he, who despiseth you, despiseth me.* Well, it is undoubted then, they are substitutes of Christ; they sit in his chair, and they preach his doctrine. But still, if *they say and do not*; what benefit can we reap from them? "What fruits but scandal?" Hold, Christians, hold: They are still ministers of Christ to you: They are still the dispensers of the mysteries of God. *All things therefore whatsoever they shall say to you, do ye:* If they act as they preach or

* St. Matth. xxiii.

† *Ibid.*† *Ibid.*

teach; do that too. But, if their actions, good or bad, appear such as you cannot do without sin; according to their works do ye not. Their actions you are no where commanded to follow; but their doctrines you are bidden to obey. Their lives whether virtuous or vicious, you will not be accountable for; but you will be accountable for the fruits of their doctrine. In short, their words you must regard: Their actions you may, only when such as you-yourself may practice with safety: But when otherwise; you neither may nor ought to mind those; much less to judge them: Unless they are such open violations of virtue as judge themselves.

"What! when we see faults committed, may we not judge them? Did not Christ himself pass sentence on the vices of the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*?" Yes, he did so: But there is an infinite distance between Christ and you. His penetration was infinite: He was the searcher of all hearts: He saw the springs of their actions; and, therefore had a right to declare the pastors of his time, *mere white sepulchres*. Your insight is shallow: You see but the superficies of actions: The heart of man is a mystery to you; and therefore you can pronounce no actions evil but such as pronounce themselves so; because you are strangers to the motives they flow from. Hence I think it sufficiently appears, that you can seldom have just room to be scandalized at any of your pastors for common actions in life, which are not express breaches of the laws of God and Nature: Because you can seldom be sure, that you see a fault in them. If you see a priest (which Heaven forbid you ever should!) commit a premeditated violation of the commandments; a sacrilege; a theft; or other gross vice; if you can believe your eyes, you must pronounce him guilty. For the nature of the fact is such as is inconsistent with innocence. Though even here the eyes have been more than once deceived. But in actions, which appear neither good or bad in themselves, you can never, with any safety, fix a crime on him; though the appearances be opposit to the very doctrine he preaches: Because bare appearances are of a deceitful nature; and the man who trusts his judgment to his senses, will oftner be deceived than inform'd.

For example, you see a priest, perhaps, a little fluster'd in his senses: And yet how deceived may you not be; if, trusting to such an appearance, you pronounce him a drunkard; when, perhaps, the abstemiousness of his diet has render'd a very necessary, yet frugal potion intoxicating to him? Appear then you charge with insincerity, when, perhaps, if his tongue was not tied, he might with edification convince you, that he only told you one part of a truth to cover or evade another, which sacramental or natural secrecy, or the love of Christian charity,

charity and peace, obliged him to conceal. A priest may dress, perhaps, a little vainly in appearance: Can you therefore be sure, that there is vanity in his heart for doing so? No: Perhaps, his chief temptation lies in a lurking ambition to be thought humble; and, that is one ingenious means he makes use of to deserve rather than possess the applause due to humility. Another on the reverse, to judge by the outward unseemliness of his garb, you would take to be an indolent, uncleanly, or covetous person: One, in short, whom you would be disposed to call a lazy sloven, or a miserly niggard. But ten to one you are mistaken. Perhaps, too great an attachment to neatness may be his chief obstacle to the perfection he is aiming at; and the deformity of his garb may be the only means he has to surmount it. In a word, a thousand instances may be brought: Each of which might afford a thousand arguments to prove, that, till we can penetrate to the secret foldings of the heart, and come at the knowledge of the moving springs, the motives of acting, we can never be safe in taking scandal at the actions of any man, which are not in themselves inconsistent with innocence, such as the crimes I have just mention'd, and such as I hope you will never have room even to suspect in your pastors.

"Well, grant all this, *you'll say*: But then how shall we be able to excuse, or avoid being scandalized at, a man, who is for ever preaching to us in confession, or out of it, steadiness, patience, forgiveness; yet is himself extremely fickle, peevish, jealous and resenting." How? Why in the first place, fickleness, peevishness, jealousy and resentment are often the effect of temper, and priests, while they are mortals, will be subject to the rude treatments of temper; which are rather their misfortune than fault. To carry them to Heaven, priests must have their temptations to struggle with as well as you. Not one of those we have named are faults in the man, who gives no consent to them. And how do you know that the priest, who discovers such foibles in himself, does really consent to them? You are strangers to the inward combats he manfully undertakes to surmount them; and therefore is it, that you often take offence at that which, perhaps, shall be the matter of his glory. Secondly, how do you know, but that what you attribute to fickleness, to peevishness, to jealousy, or resentment may be the effects of a prudential zeal, which may not however discover it's motives? It is often a necessary means to awake the sleeping Christian, and bring him to a sense of his duty.

But, what if these, or any other actions of theirs be real faults, are you therefore to lose the esteem and respect due to them as pastors? Christ sends you for pastors, not angels but men: Not impec-

cable men, but sinful men. The Church supposes them such; and, as such, obliges them as much as you to confession: Nay, they acknowledge themselves such, by going to confession; by imploring in their own persons, and praying you to implore, their forgiveness at the tribunal of God. Why then should you be scandalized, if, they sometimes appear what they own themselves to be. When they sin like you, they prove themselves to be frail like you: And when they preach against the very faults they are guilty of; it proves they are not obstinate in wrong, though frailly prone to it.

Make often reflections like these, dear Christians, and it will enable you to avoid the being easily scandalized at your pastors: Nay, they will enable you to reap benefit from the most imperfect among them. You will see their actions in a very different light. You will put a good construction on all such parts of their conduct as will bear it. And where they will not bear one; you will remember the frailty of the man to excuse the mistakes of the priest. You will remember, that they are still God's ministers, still empower'd to dispense the mysteries of God to you in life and at death. You will recollect the labours they go through, to teach and instruct you; and the dangers they encounter, by assisting you at the hazard of their liberty and lives; by visiting you amidst the contagions of a noxious prison, and the infections of every malignant sickness. This will cherish your respect and esteem for them; and your respect and esteem for them will render their doctrines of sovereign benefit to you.

Such then, beloved brethren, are the many and important advantages of not being easily scandalized at your pastors; and thus may you reap benefit even from such of them as may give you but too much room to be scandalized. I speak only of those mere hirelings, who may intrude under the wing of the Church's authority. For as to such unhappy men, whose mistaken conduct has justly drawn upon them her indignation, and forced her to expel them from her fold to save her tender flock; tho' their very fall may afford you matter of edification rather than of scandal, if you consider it in a genuine light; yet is it foreign to my present purpose: And therefore I shall take no farther notice of them than I have done in a former Sermon: * I only purpose, dear-loved laity, to prevail upon you, through the tender love I bear you, not to render fruitless the labours of your lawful pastors, by your mistaken prejudices against their persons or their conduct. Ah! Exhort me then beseech you, rather to endeavour at cherishing such an esteem for all as may render even the least among them of sovereign, eternal use to you. In short, to use the seasonable words of St. Peter, Cast-

* On Mid-Lent Sunday, p. 156.

ing away all uncleanness and abundance of malice, laying aside all rash-judgment and prejudice, which the corruption of your own heads or hearts may raise in you against them, in meekness receive (from their lips) the ingrafted word which is able to save your souls. *

To conclude, dear-loved auditors: Be generous, and meekly take the naked truths I have utter'd to you throughout this Sermon, in that honest, undesigning simplicity with which my God can bear me witness I have spoken them. If I have said one single word in this discourse which can displease you; it is beyond my design. And yet, though I should have made the greatest of you peevish, I cannot be sorry, if what I have said be crown'd with the success of benefiting the least among you. Vent on me (I give you chearful leave) vent all the bitterest effects of your resentment: I care not; if you but learn from me to treat your other more useful pastors henceforth, with such esteem and confidence as may enable you to reap salvation from them. Be angry, till experience teaches you that you are wrongly so: Be angry or be pleased, I still shall tell you, inconsistent Catholics, that one chief cause of all the miseries which you have suffer'd in this land has been, because *You have not revered the faces of God's priests.* † And if you go on thus, much longer; the time will probably be brought to pass, when the words of the apostle shall be verified, *Here is now sought* (but sought alas in vain) *among the dispensers of God's mysteries, one who may be found faithful.* ‡ Yes, O hitherto believing Christians! the time will come, if you continue your contempt of priests, when God, their sole constituent, shall punish your perversity by leaving you without a priest to disrespect, without an Altar to approach, without a Faith to save you, without

* St. James i. † Jerom. Lament. iv. m. ‡ Cor. iv.

a Heaven to hope for. Call me then an insolent, an haughty priest for warning you of your impending doom: *To me it is a thing of least concern, to be judged by you.* * For be, who judgeth me, is our Lord. † Nay, say of me to one-another, as did the Jews of Jeremiab: ‡ *Come let us devise devise of this affronting preacher: Let us smite him with the tongue, and not attend to all his words: Persecute ye, and let us persecute him; if by any means he may be deceived, and we prevail against him and be revenged on him.* In short, wreak all your spleen: I cannot fear the rage of any of you, nor court your smiles. Let the bircling, whose own the sheep are not, see the wolf coming, and flee. For my part, I have naught to fear or hope from any of you; and therefore, so I save but your souls from danger and illusion; I heed not the rest. For, if my text says right; *the good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep.* And wide as I am, at present, of being such-a-one myself, I earnestly covet to be such, after the example of my heavenly Master. O! thou, dear Lord, vouchsafe, in thy good time, to make of me and all the priesthood good and faithful shepherds. And if thy people's good require it, and thine own honour will permit, give us, thy useless servants, the inestimable blessing of ripening this flock for Thee with our own blood: Give us the sanctity of manners and purity of doctrine requisite to guide them safe to Heaven, in spite of their unthankful forwardness; and open all their hearts to take with christian candour the doctrines thou dost dictate to us: That we may lose not one of them; but at their head be join'd with that triumphant flock above, where *there shall be but one fold and one pastor.* O hear me! God of mercy hear me, I beseech Thee, in the name, &c.

* Ibid. † Ibid. ‡ Jerem. xviii. xx.

S E R M O N

On the Third SUNDAY after EASTER.

St. JOHN, xvi. 20, 22.

Amen, Amen, I say to you, that you shall weep and lament; but the world shall rejoice: And you shall be made sorrowful; but your sorrow shall be turn'd into joy. . . . And you therefore, now indeed, have sorrow: But I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice; and your joy no-one shall take from you.

THERE are then, beloved audience, there are sorrows to be endured in this life even by the just? Yes; undoubtedly there are: And they are matter of necessity for Christians to submit to. What! Shall Christ's faithful servants then be no more exempt from sadness of heart, while in the flesh, than the slaves of the world? Hold, beloved, hold: This is no consequence of the other. On the reverse;

reverse; The sorrows of the just are sorrows indeed for a little while; but then they are mere external sorrows, mere superficial griefs, which reach no further than the senses. Whereas the sorrows of the unjust are not only real but endless; not only outwardly afflicting to the senses but inwardly tormenting to the heart. The sadness of the good then is a contrast to that of the wicked. Or rather to set this matter in a more amiable light, let me say: The griefs of the godly are a contrast to the joys of the ungodly; as our divine Lord plainly shews, by the apposition in which he places both, in the words of my text. The wicked, it is true, have their joy, such as it is; which, being wholly fix'd on sensual objects, amuses only their sensitive appetites: too material and gross to penetrate to the heart. *The world shall rejoice*, says Christ; Yes: but with what kind of joy? Ah! Not with the joy of peace to the heart; For, *there is no peace for the wicked*, says the Lord. The joy then of sinners is a joy of fiction, a transitory gladness of the sense; which, lasting but a little while, shall end in everlasting heaviness of soul. Such the joy of the wicked: And this they shall have. Yes. *The world shall rejoice*.

But you, beloved, continues Christ, *You shall weep and lament: And you shall be sorrowful*. The good then must have their sorrow: Which however, arising only from the external pressure of sensitive temptations, is too feeble to affect their hearts, consoled within and sovereignly fortified with all resisting grace; It is a sorrow therefore which only plays about the surface of the sense; but cannot gain admittance to the soul: It exists but for a little while: and ends at last in never-ceasing joy of heart. Yes, *Your sorrow*, says our divine Lord, *shall be turn'd into joy, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no-one shall take from you*.

Hence I cannot help drawing two very serious reflections, the one melancholy, the other consoling: Both of the last importance to us all. And they are these:

- I. The joy of worldings, is matter of the tenderest pity; in-as-much as it is a shrewd symptom of reprobation to eternal woe: *And*
- II. The sorrows of good Christians, are matter of the noblest emulation; in-as-much-as they are the blessed seeds of a fulness of joy without end or bounds.

“O God, thou sole and sovereign source of every solid joy! Convince us of these truths; and graciously instruct us to prefer the sadness of thy blessed cross, to every gay illusion which the world rejoices in: That, eager after nothing but the main concern to follow thee, we may, the

* Romans vi.

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“little while we have to live, sow in abundance
“the fruitful tears of piety and come to thee at
“length loaded with sheafs of everlasting glad-
“ness.”

I. *You shall be made sorrowful*, says Christ to his disciples, and through them to all his elect. The State of Christians then must necessarily be a state of suffering. *In this*, says the Apostle, *in this we are call'd*. The bird is not made to fly, nor the fish to swim, more than Christians are born to suffer in the flesh. *We, who are baptized in Christ Jesus, in his death are baptized*, says, St. PAUL. * In our very baptism we are endow'd with the spirit of JESUS CHRIST at his death, and in his sufferings: And it is in expectation of our improving this spirit within us that we are made heirs to the joy of his rising from death. So that *if we become co-planted to the similitude of his death; we shall be also* (co-planted to the similitude) *of his resurrection*, as the Apostle observes; † Otherwise we never shall be so. For, says our divine Lord, *He who does not take-up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me*. † Properly speaking then, we Christians are riveted to the cross of Christ; *that is* in other terms, we are indispensably bound to share with him in his sorrows, if we will share with him in his glory. *It becometh Christ to suffer and so to enter into his glory* ‡ Can his disciples then hope to enter thither after him by any smoother way than that of sufferings? Is the servant greater than his Lord, the disciple than his master, the captive than his Redeemer? No, no: Christians, if sorrows were expedient for your divine Lord; Joy cannot be expedient for you. Surely then to rejoice and be merry with the world, cannot be safe; surely the joy of worldings is a piteous symptom of their having no part with Christ in the inheritance of the joys to come.

If you think, Christians, that you may rejoice with the world and with God; if you hope to enjoy pleasure here and hereafter; you deceive yourselves. No, no: Every thing must have its turn. Joy and sorrow cannot at once occupy the heart of man: Yet all men, good and bad, are destin'd to taste of both, one time or other. Both then must have their turn and follow one-another in the heart of every man. There are no men, in this state of mortality, so pure, so innocent, even those whose virtues merit them a boundless measure of eternal joys, but what have some light failings to entitle them to mourn a while: Surely then, if it behoved the source of innocence to suffer ere he enter'd into his glory; it is but just, that his imperfect servants should follow him in his sufferings, ere they are put into possession of their final joy? Now let us reason on the reverse. There are not any men so wicked, so abandon'd, not even they, whose life

* Romans vi. † St. Matth. x. ‡ St. Luke xxiv.

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is one continued traffic of perpetual woe, but what have done at one time or another, some slender good, to merit a degree, however small, of joy and pleasure. And GOD, whose justice will not suffer in his servants the slightest fault unpunish'd, is yet too merciful to leave the slenderest merit unrewarded. Therefore does he give-up to sorrow for a little while those favourit souls of his, for whom he is preparing an interminable store of solid joys. Just is it therefore, that those unhappy wretches, whose future griefs shall know no measure and no end, should have in this life the passing taste of joys they have earn'd; since they will have no relish for them in the next. And these in fact they have. Hence does our Saviour say to his elect: "*Amen, Amen, I say to you, that you shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice.*" Yes; you my beloved, you upon the whole have faithfully served me: And therefore have I reserved for you a joy, which no-one shall take from you. And yet have you displeased me by serving me with less constancy, less fervor, less purity than you ought: And therefore will I suspend you a while from that joy. *A little while then, and you shall not see me*; a little while, and the bridegroom absent *you shall weep and lament.* But again *a little while, and you shall see me*; again a little while, and the bride-groom shall return to you, to be with you forever; and you, my children, shall then mourn no more. For *can the children of the bride-groom mourn, as long as the bride-groom is with them?* * No, no: *Your sorrow shall be turn'd into joy.* O my dear loved souls then! *Be not dismay'd, as also those others, who have no hope.* † Think not yourselves abandon'd, because you are left to grieve a while. Rather enjoy the fruitful grief. *Now indeed you have sorrow; but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice: And your joy no-one shall take from you.* Envy, not then the joy of worldings. *The world indeed shall rejoice.* But ah! With what a kind of joy! Not with a joy-like yours, but with an empty short fallacious joy, which shall be turn'd to sorrow. Now indeed worldings have joy; tho' not a joy of peace to the heart, but of illusion to the senses. Yet soon will that joy desert, even that: Then will I look on them no more: Then *shall their very hearts be grieved; and their grief no-one shall take from them.*" O important contrast! O blessed then are they who mourn: For they shall be comforted! And surely then accursed, thrice accursed they must be, who are joyful here with the joy of worldings; if they shall remain without comfort.

Think not then, dear-loved Christians, that what I have said is any strain upon our Saviour's words; a comment of my own invention; the subtle specu-

* St. Matth. ix.

† 1 Thessalonians iv.

lation of a fertile brain. So far is it from all this, that I'll be bold to say: No other natural meaning can be given to the text. What else could our divine Lord mean, in placing the sorrows of his elect in apposition to the joys of the reprobate: if he did not mean this? Nay, if he did not mean this; what encouragement could it be for the just to endure their temporal sorrows with patience and fortitude? Tho' the sorrows of the just were to be converted into joy: It would have been but a poor encouragement to them to persist in their justice; if the joys of the wicked were not to be turn'd into endless sorrows. If the just must *weep and lament* in this life, before they can reach to joy; and the wicked may be joyful here, and not have their joy afterwards changed into endless grief; the wicked have the advantage over the good: And these would have but little encouragement to be just. Whereas it is a plain case, *First*, that there is an absolute contrast proposed to them by Christ, in this gospel, between the little sorrows they are to endure, and the joys which the wicked shall taste of: And that, *Secondly*, he proposes this contrast to them as an encouragement to prefer his service to that of the world in consideration of the difference of the rewards. It is full as plain then, that, tho' our divine Lord does not delineate in express terms, the fatal consequences of worldly joy, he sufficiently hints them to us in the detail of this other part of the contrast, by minutely disclosing the sweet effects of temporal sorrow in his elect. Ah Christians! If then the joys of worldings are thus empty, short, fallacious, and fruitful in eternal woe, as I have said, and as you can no longer doubt them to be, while you credit Jesus; what Christian in his senses can envy them? Who is there rather but must pity them? If Christ must suffer to enter into his glory; if Christians must share in his sorrows to partake of his joys; if they who have sinn'd must mourn; if man cannot rejoice in this life, and in another too; What can the joys of worldings be, but unhappy symptoms of their being reprov'd from everlasting joy? And if this be the case; with what better eye can we behold their mirth than that of pity. Nay if this dread thought awakes not all our pity; O! What shall excite compassion in us?

II. But why do I dwell on the displeasing subject? Ah! Let us leave the contumacious wicked to enjoy their miserable gladness. Let us, on the reverse, lament while they rejoice; that, when their time to weep shall come, we may deserve to see our *sorrow turn'd into joy*; and not, by joining in their false alacrity, become partakers in their griefs. Ah Christians! You are after all but delicate soldiers; if you cannot resolve to share a while in the sorrows of your sacred leader Jesus. You are quite mistaken; if you hope to taste of pleasure here, and in another world: Nay, if you think, that any

any pleasure can be found in this; or that all which wears a face of joy on earth is real joy. No, no: The only real joy, which can be tasted in this life, is that of a distaste for every earthly pleasure. And O! what greater pleasure can there be than that which is felt in the want of relish for the world's enjoyments; in a sovereign contempt for all which is earthly; in a spotless liberty of heart, a perfect purity of conscience, a life of peace and grace, quite void of terrors of the approach of death; Ah! This is joy indeed: This is a joy which belongs only to the just: This is capable of filling the whole heart of the good, and anticipating in their souls the beatitude of heaven, even in the midst of their transient sorrows. Who then, who can doubt but that the sorrows of the just, are matter of the justest emulation, as they are the faithful seeds of a joy beyond limits, a joy without end!

To you then should properly belong, O sacred champions of God's glory, to defend his cause at present: You whose dauntless fortitude, as if entrenched in bodies of steel, and bowels of adamant, has caused even tyranny itself to tremble, while it beheld you suffering for God the most excruciating torments, and saw, at the same time, the bitterest tortures yield you exquisitely delight. O the fine sight it must be, beloved brethren, to see those holy heroes forsake their wedded loves, their tender babes, their friends and families, to follow cheerfully a barbarous band of executioners: abandon the palaces where they abode with so much ease and splendor, to earth themselves alive in dungeons, where they are fed with sorrows, and buried in a loathsome obscurity; walk upon red-hot coals or bars, as if they were on paths of flowers; feast upon their pains, amidst the flaming piles, and chant-out psalms of heavenly praise, like agonizing swans, to loathsome desponding death.

To you likewise belongs the doing honour to our God: O sacred penitents! To you: O intrepid strugglers against a giddy world! To you: O courageous innocents, who wisely preserved a life of candour, by a preventing state of anticipated penance! For you are best judges, what you gain'd by the exchange; when, finding the world full irksome in it's very joys, you turn'd your backs on it, to seek the enjoyment of your God, so lovely in his very rigour. O Paul! O Anthony! O Magdalen! O Mary of Egypt! Methinks, when I contemplate you, profoundly buried in your penitential caves, and holy hermitages, I find you faithful to your every day's employ, to your constant task to *sweep, lament, and sigh* and mourn. But ah! sweet are the tears which flow along your cheeks: Sweet the sighs which issue from your blessed hearts. O blessed parents! O heavenly *John of the Cross*! O sacred *Teresa of Jesus*! What days, what nights, did you not spend in tears, and sighs and lamenta-

tions? And ah! How? how pleasing the employ! How charming indeed must it not be, when all your tears but made you thirsty after more, when your incessant prayers were ---- *To suffer and be scorn'd for Christ* ---- *Either to suffer, or to die for Jesus*! Hail, glorious saints then, whose lives are the best argument of what the experienced St. *Augustin* so elegantly say'd: "Sweeter by far are the tears of a penitential spirit, than all the joys of theatres." Hence then I argue; and, I think, not foreign to the purpose: If the loving providence of the Almighty has placed so much delight in these virtues, which are, after all, of the most rugged, the most difficult; If it changed coals of fire into flowers for his martyrs; if it turn'd the most horrid deserts into gardens of delight, to his favourite hermits; how can it be doubted, but that every sorrow, which the just are oppress'd with by the world their enemy, will, by him be changed into joy? Ah! if such be the previous consolations with which they are consoled, who in this life piously mourn with Christ in the flesh; what joy may we not conceive, they will be rewarded with by Christ when in glory? Ah! What then are the little transient sorrows of the just in this life, but matter of the justest noblest emulation? Well then might St. *Paul* say, that *the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared to the future glory which shall be reveal'd in us*, * and which those sufferings shall end in.

O thrice blessed then, ye just! Who but must envy you your happiness of *weeping and lamenting* a little while; when *your sorrows shall so soon be turn'd into joy*? Courage then, Christians! Be yourselves. Don't give credit to the language of licentiousness, to the sophistical fallacies of worldings: Yield rather to the force of reason. The vicious worldings, to flatter their fallacious appetites, with the bitter joys of their own inverted deportment, call modesty, a melancholy; temperance, a penury; and meekness, a stupidity. Because the pious are apt to appear with a countenance composed, with humble air, and serious deportment; they falsely gather thence, that God treats his servants with the roughest usage, and gives them nothing to feed on but gall and wormwood. Ah! They are strangers to the sweet delights of the spiritual Manna, hidden under that gravity of features: They are ignorant, what it is to be *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing*.

There has been a *Solomon*, tired and surfeited of earthly joys; tho' sought with eagerness; tho' reap'd with ease; tho' enjoy'd in their most flattering height. But never was there found as yet one saint, who quarrel'd with his sorrows. Even holy *Job*, who depreciates the gaieties of life, with every vilifying epithet, was never heard to vent one faint reproach against his dunghill. Surely then the sorrows of the good must want the force to reach

* *Romans* viii.† *2 Cor.* vi.

their heart; or there must be a certain something of exstic joy within, which blunts the edge of them, and will not suffer them to affect it.

And yet, this notwithstanding, I don't pretend to deny that the first entrances of virtue may be somewhat rugged and untractable in the beginning to unexperienced feet. But then: For little you advance; the rugged path smooths-up before you. And this I'll venture to promise, that, at every step you take to move-on resolutely towards perfection, your spirits, your strength, and your comfort will augment.

The children of *Israel* set-out on their escape from the oppressive servitude of *Egypt* to seek their freedom in the desert, and afterwards their felicity in the land of *Promise*. On the margin of the sea they look-back; and behold *Pbaraob*, sword in hand, pursues them with a powerful army at his heels of enemies all powerful, all exasperated, all arm'd and breathing revenge. Judge you the plight the poor fugitives must be in, anxious, disturb'd, dismay'd and doubtful, how to evade the impending dangers threatening them on every side. To face-about is the same as to rush upon inevitable ruin, amidst a furious people ready to devour them; amid'st a thick array of scimeters, ready unsheathed for butchery: And to throw themselves into the flood, is encountering an army of waves, and a nation of monsters, Dreadful dilemma? Must they wait for destruction, or run to provoke it? O the perplexities! O the panics! O the agonies! But *Moses* lifts his wonder-working rod: And lo! seas divide from seas; they enter the waters; monsters disappear; the waves subside; *Pbaraob* is befotted; his army overwhelm'd; the way lies before them smooth and open; their retreat is secured behind by the re-joining floods: And the path, as they pass along, instead of sands and weeds, is overspread with flowers. Out of the water which was before, says the Wise-man, there appear'd dry land, and in the red-sea, a way without impediment, and out of the enormous deep a springing field.... And as lambs they rejoiced, magnifying thee, O Lord who did'st deliver them. * Before they attempted the ford: O what difficulties! what dangers threaten'd! Once they moved-on: O what ease and safety they found! Before, what terrors oppress'd them! Afterwards, what joy restored them! As lambs they rejoiced, magnifying thee, O Lord, who did'st deliver them. What more natural picture than this can we figure to ourselves of those intrepid souls, who, bravely turning their backs on the more than *Egyptian* slavery of this world, undertake, to follow *Jesus* through the paths which he has laid open to them by his all-smoothing cross? Ere they set-out, O what reluctances! What diffidences! What recoilings of the heart! But once they have advanced a

* *Wisdom* xix.

step or two, how does all terror vanish! How does the way grow smooth! How soon is *their sorrow turn'd into joy*! Still then, O Christians, will you hesitate to follow Christ? Ah! Will you still despond? "What, *you cry*, shall I then break this friendship? Shall I dismiss all this attendance? "I mortify this sensuality; I conquer this aversion? "I restore these fruits of fraud? I recall this calumny? I retrench this pomp, this luxury? I divorce this passion, this folly, this evil-habit, this lawless love? I henceforth decline all sport, all pastime, all enjoyment of the earth? Alas! "What would the world not say? And what a gantlope must I not prepare for of gibes and sneers and laughs, and smart reflections?" But away, Christians, away with these coward reasonings. Begin the journey once, and you also shall find the way before you strew'd with flowers. *You--- shall be made sorrowful*, for a while; But soon your sorrow shall be turn'd into joy: In a word, *your very hearts shall rejoice: And even as lambs they shall rejoice, magnifying thee, O Lord, who wilt deliver them*. What shall I say? O blissful mourning, big with such exstic comfort! O seeds of joy beyond expression! O sorrows worthy our noblest emulation!

"Fine talk, *you'll say*! But don't we see quite the reverse? Don't we see those persons, who undertake to follow Christ, always pensive, grave and anxious; full of circumspection; confining all their sentiments to rigorous laws; never brightening at entertainments; never new with modes and fashions; never elevated with new employs, new honours, new acquisitions; rarely at balls, seldom at entertainments, very seldom at any gay amusements; and yet with all this, frequently harass'd with sickness, poverty, disasters and unexcited insults? If all this then be true; how are all their sorrows converted into joys? "If this be gentleness with God; what must his rigours be?" But O mortals! How long will you let yourselves be thus imposed upon by outward seemings? How long will you judge the works of God, without so much as knowing even the first merits of the cause? Why do you not inform yourselves more clearly of the truth, by your own practice? Why not, try what are the sovereign charms of a good conscience to silence every sorrow? Why not observe how fertile and how florid are the ways, by which your Saviour leads his followers? Ah! The reason is that you imagin the way more rugged, more difficult, more dangerous, and your cross more heavy than it is. I don't dispute that there are hardships to endure, if you will carry on your cross after Christ. But still I say, rugged as the way may be, it is easier and safer to run along than creep. Heavy as your cross may be, it is lighter to carry than to drag. I don't then deny, the sorrows of the

the just to be a heavy cross; but I pretend that they are of an easy, nay a pleasing carriage; because the just have God to support them under it. God himself descends and abides within them, to conquer every difficulty with his forces. The just in short fatigue a little for God, but at the same time they fatigue along with him. And who may not emulate and nobly envy the sufferings and sorrows of those, who endure indeed a little affliction for God, but happily endure it in the society of God?

The patriarch *Jacob* submitted to a fourteen-years servitude, for the love of his darling *Rachel*. The story I believe is more generally known than applied, and better remember'd than reflected on. In the *first* seven years, there is no doubt, but he must have endured some fatigue: But the sacred *Code* assures us, that this fatigue was not immoderate; in as much as it was render'd light by the vigour of his affection: *Jacob therefore served for Rachel seven years; and they seem'd but a few days, because of the greatness of his love.* In the *second* seven years, however we find not the least symptom of sorrow, not the least hint of fatigue. But whence this difference? Did not *Jacob* serve these other seven years with equal punctuality, labour and sweat? Doubtless, he, did. Whence came it then, that the *first* seven years were but lightly fatiguing; the *last* seven free from all fatigue? Ah! The reason, which an ingenious expositor gives us, is clear and consoling. *Jacob* during the *first* term of his servitude, was labouring for *Rachel*; whom he already loved, but as yet possess'd only in hopes: In the *second*, he was toiling for *Rachel* in the possession of *Rachel*. He who suffers for a beloved object, which he wishes to possess, feels but little pain; because the edge of his pains blunted by his hopes, is not acute enough to wound him, or wounds him but gently. He, who reaches to enjoy for a companion in his toils, the fondled object of his toils, not only does not suffer, but reaps delight from his labours; because the little bitter which still adhered to his fatigues, is absorb'd by the sweets of the beloved possession. Dear-loved Christians! It is not of *Jacob*, as you may mistakenly fancy, that I mean principally to talk: No: I am talking of every good Christian. I mean to ask you: What sorrows, what labours, what pains, they can be sensible of, who suffer for God? Who suffer with God? Look ye, favour'd souls: You suffer for God, as *Jacob* suffer'd for *Rachel*; and this thought alone ought to suffice to sweeten every pain. You suffer with God as *Jacob* did with *Rachel*; and this sole reflection may not only sweeten all your sorrows, but even turn them into joys. And has not your gracious God given you the assurance of all this? "Courage, says he, by the mouth of his prophet, courage, my dear-loved children: For I am labouring with you. You have but half the weight

"upon you of the labours you must pass through:
"The other half your God will cheerfully cooperate to bear along with you. Yes, *You shall serve him with one shoulder.* * The other he will supply. *Fear not: Let not your hands be slack.* "en'd. *The Lord your God in the midst of you strong and mighty, he will save you: He will rejoice upon you in gladness; He will be silent in his love: He will be joyful upon you in praise.* †

Ah! beloved Christians such are the endearing invitations your God and Saviour gives you, in the Holy Scriptures to suffer for and with him, that you may reign both in and through him. Such the gracious promises he makes you to lighten, nay, to remove, the sorrows you encounter for him. You must then indeed be extremely in the wrong; if to such tenderness you still correspond with obstinacy and frowardness, and all for fear of a little sorrow: Sorrow which has little more of what it expresses than the name: Sorrow which has little duration more than momentary: Sorrow which is fruitful in nothing less than eternal joy. While you are in this vale of tears you must weep and be sad. It is the time of your pregnancy, Christians. And what do you imagin you are pregnant with but *JESUS CHRIST*, whom you conceived in baptism. There he began to form himself in your souls; by another kind of formation indeed than that in the womb of his blessed virgin-mother: A formation of grace. In her he was form'd, by the Holy Ghost, all at once, and perfectly form'd: But in the souls of Christians he is form'd by degrees, is form'd thro' the operation of his grace, improved by our co-operation. If you persevere then to make a good use of your sufferings and sorrows; Christ will, at length, be perfectly form'd in you, and you shall bring him forth perfect in your actions, *that is*, you shall become so like to *JESUS CHRIST*, that his eternal Father will acknowledge you for his children; admit you to share of his felicity; and convert your sorrow into joy. Then shall this sickness torment no more; that calumny give no more shame; this other loss afflict no longer: That other grievance be repair'd. Now, indeed, are you like a woman, who, when she travelleth, bath sorrow; because her hour is come, † for suffering. But then you shall be like her when deliver'd: Who, *When she hath brought forth the child, remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.* § For then you also, having brought forth *JESUS CHRIST* in your lives, shall no more remember your past sorrows, but with ecstasies of joy. Then, in a word, your hearts shall rejoice and your joy no-one shall take from you. O, be it so, all-bounteous God! We earnestly implore Thee: In the name, &c.

* *Sophonias* iii. † *Ibid.* ‡ In this Gospel. § *Ibid.*

S E R M O N

On the Fourth SUNDAY after EASTER.

St. JOHN, xvi. 7.

It is expedient for you, that I go. For if I go not; the comforter shall not come to you: But if I go; I will send him to you.

CHRIST, beloved auditors, loved his disciples with an affection purely spiritual; and therefore well might he expect the like unmixt affection from them. The love of Christ's disciples for him was partly sensual; and therefore no wonder he should not be pleased with it. Their hearts were too sensitively attach'd to his bodily presence; and this attachment was such a bar to the presence of his divine spirit in them, that he absolutely declared to them, that they should never be partakers of the latter, till he had wean'd them from the former, by departing from them. *It is expedient for you, says he, that I go: For if I go not; the comforter shall not come to you.* If I had told you, beloved, without quoting my authority, that a sensual attachment even to the human nature of Jesus Christ is an impediment to the sacred operations of his divine Spirit in you; you would have hardly believed me. For, what can be more seemingly innocent, nay, enviable, than an excess of affection for that blessed body, which was the price of our ransom? "O happy, happy excess (you would cry) which tends to the linking us inseparably to that model of purity!" And yet you see such an affection, such an attachment, when sensual, and therefore derogatory to the more sublime love which we ought to cultivate for both his divine and human nature, is displeasing even to Jesus himself; and therefore he declares himself under the necessity of weaning all those from it who are to be actuated with his Holy Spirit. *"If I go not; the comforter shall not come to you."* Your affection for me is tender; but then your tenderness has something in it of sensual, something of carnal: Whereas the Comforter is all spirit and will not reside in any but a heart which is void of all but what is spiritual, and unattach'd to any created object, as such. *It is expedient therefore, that I go.* Because if I go; you will be somewhat wean'd from your sensual tenderness for me: Your carnal affection for my human nature will

"become more subservient to your spiritual love of my divine and human substance: And then your hearts will be fitter to receive the Holy Ghost, and I will send him to you."

O Christians of mine! If then, as it appears, the least degree of sensual attachment is of such dangerous tendency, though fixt on so pure, so holy an object as the sacred humanity of Christ; how very dangerous (think I) must it not be, to suffer your hearts to be attach'd to any objects inconsistent with a pure and perfect love of God? This reflection it is, which leads me now to exhort you, to banish from your breasts every attachment which forwards not that perfect love you owe to God as God. To render then my advice the more effectual, I shall now endeavour to shew you;

- I. The nature of sensual attachments, and the marks to know them by; and,
- II. The danger of such attachments, and the methods of shunning them.

"O God! Thou plenitude of bliss I embitter to our souls and senses every object which does not lead to Thee: And since Thou has't made our hearts capacious to enjoy Thee, let them be void of all beside thyself: Nay keep them ever restless till they repose in Thee."

I. When I talk of sensual attachments to created objects inconsistent with the pure and perfect love we owe to our Lord God, it cannot well be supposed that I mean to talk of those which are inseparable from actual or habitual sin, whether mortal or venial. It being self-evident that every attachment to sin is not only dangerous but criminal; and not only inconsistent with a perfect love of God, but, destructive of it.

There are, besides those affections which are immediately sinful, and therefore evidently to be avoided, others of a less obvious nature; which are not, however, always unpernicious in their consequences. Such are those attachments to earthly goods which hurry mankind into the perpetual restless pursuit of riches, pleasures, power and esteem. Now we cannot be said to be attach'd to these, if we barely pursue them with reference to God, and love them only as they are the means of loving and honouring

honouring him. For then our love of them is calm, orderly, and subordinate to the love of the divine donor of them: Or rather, to speak more properly, it is not them we love, but God in them. An earthly attachment is a violent affection, the turbulent impetuosity of a heart, which, seeking itself in the object it fondles, is carried or rather hurried out of itself into the created good, which attracts it. This kind of attachment, as it is always fix'd, in opposition to the establish'd oeconomy of the divine dictates, on objects unworthy of, or not wholly deserving, the affection of the soul, is ever attended with disorderly tumults in the heart; often robs it of all rest; and makes it lost to it's owner, lost to itself, even to a degree of madness or folly. I have many times seen it externally accompanied with some of the strongest degrees of convulsive pangs, voracity of stomach, and eagerness of motion in every limb: At other times I have seen it carried to the reversed extremes, decay of appetite, a total loss of rest and sleep, and almost common feeling: Which if not remedied in time; causes a slow-consuming languor, that dries up the very marrow, wastes the seeds of life, brings on despair and even untimely death.

Such are the common progressions of attachments to the very slightest things; if not in time restrain'd. Nay, there is no saying, to what extravagance of fury any passion or affection for the most trivial earthly objects may proceed; if it be suffer'd to get head and become violent. For every violence of affection is a kind of drunken rage of the soul, which unbraces all it's harmony, and, without regard to the merit or demerit of the things he loves, worries the whole man with a frenzy of fondness for it, so as to keep him ever on the rack of jealousy, for fear any besides himself should enjoy, or even wish to enjoy it; or else so as to torture him with restless hatred for all who are not equally enamour'd with the object he fondles. Such are the disorders attending every violence of attachment: Disorders in themselves absolutely insupportable. And therefore, as no man, beloved, can answer how soon the circumstances gathering round his affection, or the object it is fix'd upon, will render his attachment violent; it must highly behove all men to stand perpetually upon their guard against letting their hearts be attach'd to any created objects, though ever so trifling, ever so innocent. And the more ought they to stand upon their guard as all have the seeds of such a pernicious attachment in them; and those seeds in every one are big with the like evil fruits: *Every one*, says St. James, * *is tempted by his own concupiscence abstracted and allured: Afterwards concupiscence, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is consummate, engendereth death.*

* Chap. i.

To know therefore when our affections for created objects are free from dangerous attachment and when not, we must pry into the effects of them in us. If their operations are calm and regular; if they keep an exact conformity with the love and duty we owe to God, as our God; if we make them not ends but means, and love the creatures only for the creator's sake; in a word, if, mindful that *every excellent present*, as St. James says, † *and every perfect gift is from above, descending from the Father of lights*, all our fondness for the goods of this life is bounded to the applying them to such uses as we think will best answer the intention or the divine donor of them; and, at the same time, we endeavour to use them without sensuality, and to be ready to part with them without regret; we have great room to comfort ourselves with the hopes, that our affections for earthly things are not attachments to them. But—for little excess, irregularity, or disorder, we discover in our love for created beings; for little it breaks in upon our accomplishment of the ordinances, nay the councils of God; for little, in short, that it obstructs, or even damps, the fervor of our love for him; our earthly love is dangerous and we ought, by all means to suppress it as a pernicious attachment.

There are *three* sorts of objects which are apt to insinuate themselves into the heart of man: Those which operate by the instigations of sensuality: Those which owe all their attractions to the secret impulse of nature: And those which receive all their activity from the dictates of devotion. The *first* sort are in themselves neither good nor bad; if consider'd abstractedly from the effects they produce: Such are worldly pomp and splendor, gaiety of dress and brilliancy of equipage: Such are balls, operas, comedies, and public feasts, and public shows. All which it is absolutely possible to reconcile with the nicest innocence. And yet, if we consider them in practice, how apt they are to dissipate the soul, to enervate heavenly affections, and banish from the heart those nobler objects which ought to engross it; we cannot but see that every degree of love for them is a dangerous attachment, which every Christian ought to guard against, who aims at perfection and wishes to improve in the seraphic love of God.

Again, That *second* sort of objects, which, with the voice of nature, call upon us for affection: Such as a parent, a child, a consort, a relation, a benefactor and a friend, have nothing of evil in them of themselves; but, on the contrary are real goods and worthy of our affection. 'Tis we deform them into evils, by loving them to an undue excess; by suffering our affection for them to raise disorderly tumults in our breasts; by carrying our tenderness for them to sensual passion, anxiety, jea-

* Ibid.

lousy.

lousy, solicitude, or neglect of superior duties, such as the duty of advancement in the love of God, of perfect conformity with his divine commands, and of intire submission of ourselves and all things to his all-wise disposal. And it is this excess which makes our affection for them a mere earthly attachment, and ourselves unworthy of the name of disciples of Christ. Hence Christ himself declares, that even this love, though so natural, so lawful, so commendable in itself (if it be carried to excess, if it be not regulated by Christian prudence, and subordinate to the will of God) is extremely dangerous; and may even forfeit to a disciple of Christ the privilege of a disciple; by infringing upon the honour due to Christ. *He who loveth father or mother, son or daughter above me, is not worthy of me*, says Christ. * Nay, our divine Lord expresses himself elsewhere in yet stronger terms: *If any man, says he, † come to me and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, nay, and his own life besides; he cannot be my disciple*. So far then from letting the love of created objects, even of those which the laws of nature command us to love, break-in upon the superior love we owe to the sovereign source of their and our beings: If we mean to have any part with Christ in God; we must convert into hatred every affection for them which any way obstructs our advancement in the pure love of him.

But there is *another* kind of objects, both within and without us, to all appearance, of a far more delicate nature: Those I mean which receive all their influence in our affection from the dictates of devotion, and which are therefore deem'd goods of the holiest, nay, of the most desirable kind. And yet even these are but too often fruitful in the disorders and excesses I have already mention'd; and therefore all degrees of attachment to them ought to be equally avoided: Such are your very frequent confessions and communions, tendernesses in prayer, frequent spiritual conferences, inward consolations, holy dissolvings of the soul in time of meditation, and other religious comforts, which devout persons are often favour'd with. These are all in themselves great and desirable blessings, where the person, who is indulged with them, is under the direction of a prudent, learned, holy and experienced pastor; and in a christian readiness to renounce them, when God shall be pleased to afflict him with the denial of them. But whenever this readiness is wanting in the penitent; or the director is not wholly versed in the illusions attending on too great a fondness for these spiritual sensations; they are not safe. And therefore is it of the utmost consequence for Christians to guard against an excess of desire or fondness of them; lest, from a state of piety, a sudden disappointment throw them into an absolute in-

devotion and tepidity. For, how often does it happen, that a person, who has been indulged with these kinds of spiritual comforts, on the first barrenness of devotion, grows melancholy, is tired with the least aridity, grows fractious, dejected, discouraged; murmurs at his affliction, repines, and gives himself up to spiritual sloth the mother of every vice.

Another danger too attending on these imperfect degrees of piety, is spiritual pride? This often hurries devout persons into a fond opinion of their own little, religious actions, or makes them, at least, tender of the reputation of being devout. And therefore ought we, with redoubled seriousness, to be upon our guard always to think but meanly of ourselves, and never to desire more reputation, than is profitable to the edification of our neighbour and the promotion of the Almighty's honour. The chief means then of effecting this will be a total submission of ourselves to God in spirituals as well as temporals, without ever desiring any internal comforts more than God is pleased to give us, and those only as long as he sees them proper for us. O, how many souls have been lost for want of this submission! How many have fallen into sin, illusion, heresy, damnation, by too great an attachment to spiritualized sensuality. And how many, for want of making God the chief mover of all their affections, have render'd the greatest spiritual blessings the severest curses! Such is the nature and such the marks of earthly attachment.

II. After what I have said, it is almost needless to add any thing, Christians, to convince you, how very dangerous it is to suffer your hearts to be attached to aught which is earthly, when you have a God who is worthy, and has a right to engross all your affections. It is sufficient to convince us of this, that we reflect only on the greatness of the injury we do to God: An injury so much the more crying, as he has commanded us to give our hearts wholly to him, and has a right to those hearts, in consideration of what he is; what we are, and what he has done for us: A God who created us out of nothing, and created us for the enjoyment of himself: Our Author and our end. *I the Lord, says he, * am your beginning and your end*. What then can we expect; if we alienate our hearts from him, by attaching them to or dividing them with his creatures, but that he should withhold his spirit from us and fulfill his word, *the Holy Ghost shall not come to you*? And what have we then to do but seriously to break with the world and reunite ourselves to him? What have we to trust to but seriously to employ the main emotion of our souls; Love, I mean, to link ourselves to God. It was in this love, that Salomon, that experienced worldling,

* St. Matth. x. † St. Luke xiv.

* Apocal. i.

saw the vanity of every affection which tended not to God. It was in the perfect love of God he saw the emptiness of every other object out of him. Let us then, beloved brethren, learn wisdom from his experience, and recur to a serious study of this sacred affection: That we may drown all other affections in it. Let neither flesh, nor blood, nor life, nor death, nor any other created thing, separate us by false attachment, from that pure love of God which is in CHRIST JESUS. Let us remember that CHRIST himself would not suffer his apostles to be sensually attach'd even to so holy an object, so desirable a good as his visible presence, but obliged them to renounce it for a time, as an impediment to their reception of the ampler communications of his Holy Spirit: Because that Holy Spirit requires a heart pure and void of every created affection which may lessen the perfect love of God. *If I do not go; the Holy Ghost shall not come to you.*

Wherefore then, beloved, let us henceforth endeavour to throw-off all fondness for earthly things, though seemingly ever so innocent: That our hearts, as the compass is, when distant from it's favorite pole, may remain restless till they fix in God. Thou, O GOD, did'st create them to be so; and even in spite of our perversity, are they so. "Our hearts," says *St. Augustin*, are restless, till they "repose in Thee." Yes, spite of all our perversity, Thou alone can'st settle them; Thou alone replenish them. With other things they may be taken-up, but never fill'd. No: It is thy immensity must fill them, or they remain insatiable. Fill them then, gracious God, with thy enlivening grace, and let all other objects sicken (nay, deaden) to our souls but Thee. And since it is expedient for us, Lord, that Thou be sometime corporally absent from our eyes; fulfill thy gracious word, and send the Comforter to us. Which I beseech Thee; In the Name, &c.

S E R M O N

On the Fifth SUNDAY after EASTER.

St. JOHN, xvi. 24.

Until now you have not ask'd any thing in my name.

Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.

YOU wonder, beloved Christians, why you advance so little in the great work of your Salvation; You wonder, nay, murmur, at the ill success of your temporal industry: And, when Things run counter to your wishes; how do you repine! But ah, dearest Fellow-Christians! Why do you wonder? Why do you repine? If you covet the grace and assistance of the Almighty; why don't you ask it? Is it so grievous a task to recur for relief, when you may have it for asking it? So desirous is your divine benefactor of granting you every thing you want, that he graciously condescends to court you to ask it of him, by a solemn promise, that you shall never ask in vain. *Amen, Amen I say to you: If you ask the Father any thing in my name; he will give it you.* Whom then can you blame, but yourselves, for the want of every blessing which is denied you? The gifts of God are surely worth very little, if they are not worth your asking for. And yet, O how generally remiss are Christians in this

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particular! It is this remissness your Saviour so tenderly complains of in the ineffable words of my text: *Until now you have not ask'd any thing in my name.* And I appeal to yourselves, if he has not the justest cause of complaint: Instead then of murmuring at his providence, and wondering that you receive not every favour you wish for; rather wonder that you receive any, while you really ask for none.

"What! Christians; and not pray? 'Tis a mistake: We say our prayers daily in private; hear public prayers on holy-days; and whenever we want favours of God, are ready to ask them in Christ's name." It may be so: Christians. But then, how do you say your prayers? How do you ask blessings of God? Every request, is not a prayer; and Christ has not promised, that any thing else shall be heard but our prayers. *Therefore I say to you, says Christ, all things whatsoever you ask praying, believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you.*

Hence, beloved, is the mystery unfolded, why you want, and wish, and ask so many favours of God more than you receive. It is not, that your

St. Mark xi.

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Saviour

Saviour has deceived you: But you have deceived yourselves. You have ask'd, and ask'd, and ask'd many things in the name of Christ. And yet, as he reproaches you, *Until now you have not ask'd any thing in his name*: That is, you have not ask'd any thing *praying*. Hitherto you have used his holy name in vain; because, you have either used it to wrong purposes, or in a wrong manner. Awake then, dear Fellow-Christians, from your illusion: Accept the gracious invitation of Christ to prayer. *Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full*. Ask as you ought; ask *praying*; and ask, for the future, with double diligence. That you may henceforth be able to practise this with success, I shall briefly explain to you;

- I. The nature and necessary conditions of prayer;
and,
- II. The fruitful, wondrous efficacy of it.

"Mean time, O Thou, all-gracious God!
"Dart thy bright influence through our souls and
"lift our hearts to Thee; that, tasting once the
"sweets of spiritual conversation with Thee, we
"may grow eager after it and seek the true de-
"light, which prayer affords to all who use it fre-
"quently and use it well."

I. Prayer is a kind of spiritual intercourse with God: The only means we creatures have to converse with, and entertain, our almighty Creator. 'Tis an humble elevation of the mind and heart to his divine Majesty, to implore the grace, assistance and relief we want of him in our necessities. Now, if we consider the infinit distance between the Divine Being and us; if we but reflect on our own contemptible littleness, and the immensity of his greatness and glory; we cannot but know, that it behoves us, in approaching to him, to use the utmost circumspection in our behaviour as well external as internal. And, therefore, whenever we go to our prayers we cannot place ourselves in too reverential a posture. With what profound respect ought we not to kneel, when we are talking to him! How decently ought not our limbs to be compos'd; our body erect; our knees on the ground; our eyes either modestly closed or devoutly fix'd on our book, or on him, or his altar, or on whatever else may lift our attention to him! How carefully ought we not to avoid lolling, leaning, gazing on one side or another, and every irreverence! What can be a greater shame than to see a creature behave with indecency or indifference, in the presence of his Creator, in the very act of imploring his assistance? And yet, O immortal Majesty of Heaven! O thou before whom the angels of Heaven tremble, and the earth shakes from it's foundations! How often art

thou thus grossly insulted! How often do we behave, in praying to Thee, with an indignity of deportment, which we would not presume to use to many of our fellow-creatures! And this is one cause, beloved, why you ask in vain many of the favours you want.

Examen a little into your behaviour at prayer, and judge, from your deportment at it, whether or not it is worthy to be call'd prayer. Are you any sooner on your knees than sitting back on your heels; lolling on the first bench or chair which is near you; staring about at every little rumour you hear; if not often interrupting your prayers in church with impertinent chat? Who can give a better account of fashions at a play than you can at Church? Who is more censorious or watchful of a neighbour's conduct in a profane assembly than you are in the house of God? And can you call this praying to God? No, it is insulting him. And, therefore, it is, as St. James the apostle says, that *you have not, because you ask not*. That is, you do not *ask praying*. You ask indeed; but not in a manner becoming the dignity of prayer. In short, says the same holy apostle, *You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss*. Whatever you do then, Christians, leave-off such indecencies. Demean yourselves, in the awful presence of God's all-seeing majesty, with a decorum at least equal to that, which you must think but due even to an earthly superior. If you are sick, or lame, or otherwise indisposed for kneeling, standing or sitting may be sometimes allow'd you. But then there is a reverence to be shewn in the easiest posture your condition may require you to be in. In short, conversing with your Maker, whether sick or well, whether kneeling, standing, sitting, or laid-down, in bed or out; your external carriage should express internal reverence. And this is one condition necessary to raise your petitions conformable to the nature of prayers.

And yet, beloved, it is the least of the many conditions with which your petitions ought to be accompanied. If your limbs should be thus compos'd, while you are at prayers, how much more compos'd ought your mind and heart to be? God sees the one and the other as distinctly as he does your external members: And, therefore, cannot but be anger'd to indignation, when he sees a creature presuming to call his attention down upon it; while, at the same time, that very creature disdains to honour his awful Majesty with the attention which is sovereignly his due. Nay, he expressly declares his indignation at such treatment by the mouth of his holy prophet *Isaiab*. * And our divine Saviour reiterates it to the *Pharisees* of his time: † *Ye hypocrites! well hath Isaiah prophesied of you saying,*

* *Isaiab* xxv. † *St. Matth.* xv.

This people honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me: And in vain do they worship me. Ah Christians! Christians! Are there no Pharisees here? No Hypocrites among you? Have you never stood in the presence of your GOD, with your lips uttering petitions to him: while your hearts have run riot after objects quite foreign to him? If you have; in vain did you worship him; If you have; your worship was a profanation of his dread Majesty. And, therefore, is it no wonder, if, instead of blessings, you reap'd curses to yourselves: No wonder, if, instead of departing better'd in yourselves, better'd in your circumstances, you have gone from his presence in a worse situation of body, soul and circumstance than you were in before. The reason is plain: *You ask'd and received not, because you ask'd amiss.*

But then, beloved, let your lips and your hearts be ever so respectfully lifted up together to the Lord your GOD; you can have little room to hope, that he will vouchsafe any attention to the overflowings of either, unless you endeavour to present them to him pure and clean from every thing which is sinful and displeasing in his sight. Shall a poor reptile of the earth dare rise in rebellion against the Author of his being; persist in an actual enmity with him; and yet presume to expect from him a favour for asking it? What insolent arrogance would not this be! Christ has indeed graciously made himself guarantee, that all your prayers shall be heard. But do prayers consist merely in words? No, says venerable Bede, "Prayer consists not merely in the utterance of a few supplicatory words; but in faithfully and devoutly fulfilling our duty to our Creator." Without this then, Christians, call your petitions what you please: They are really no prayers, or not such as Christ promised a blessing to. For, as the Wiseman says, *the sacrifices of the wicked are abomination to GOD.** And elsewhere, *He, who, turns away his ears from bearing the law, even his prayer shall be execrable.†* Think then, Christians, and apply this doctrine to yourselves. How often have you bent your knees to GOD to implore his assistance; while your hearts have been bent to some sinful idol of your own corrupt inclinations? How often have you approach'd to that fountain of purity, crusted-over with uncleanness! At least, have you ever been sufficiently careful ere you placed yourselves in his aw-presence, to purify your hearts, by contrition, from every stain of sinful affections? If you have not; cease to wonder at the little advantage you have reap'd from your petitions. Rather wonder at, and acknowledge, the merciful goodness of GOD, in not exterminating you from his presence, for presuming to insult him with prayers which were abominati-

* Prov. xv.

† Ibid. xxviii,

ons in his sight, or at least with such devotions as wanted the desired purity to render them pleasing to him. *You ask'd and received not:* And why, but *because you ask'd amiss?* It was for want of this desired purity, that David, with all his devotion and humiliation of mind and heart, in praying to GOD for the life of the child of *Bathsheba*, the child of his sin, was by the Almighty refused what he pray'd for. He had not sufficiently cleansed himself from sin: His concern for having offended his GOD, was mixt with a concern for the fruit of his offence: His contrition was not equal to his crime. And therefore, *He ask'd and received not, because he ask'd amiss.*

However, beloved, remember that you are not promised *all things you ask absolutely*, but *all things whatsoever you ask Praying*. You ask then, but you cannot be said to ask praying; whenever you ask what is unlawful or unfit for you. And therefore never wonder if you are not gratified: But rather thank the infinit goodness of GOD for denying you, when you are weak enough to make idle petitions. The Royal Prophet, in the abundance of his grief, was weak enough to ask GOD for the preservation of the child's life which he had gotten in adultery. The request was unlawful; because GOD had signified to him, by the mouth of his prophet *Nathan*, that he would manifest his divine justice by punishing him with the death of that child. *Again* the life of that child might probably have wean'd his affections from GOD, or might, at least, as he was so fond of it, have lessen'd his contrition for the crime, by which he got it: It could not therefore be proper for him, that the child should live; the life of which was of such dangerous consequence to his salvation, and so opposit to the glory of GOD. No wonder therefore, that all his tears, humiliations, and petitions for the life of the infant, should not avail. He sued, he petition'd, he ask'd, but he did not *ask praying*. In other words, *He ask'd and received not, because he ask'd amiss.*

In like manner, dearest Christians, you often ask favours of heaven. But alas, perhaps, if you knew what you ask; you would find, that it is what only the utmost rigour of GOD's justice can induce him to grant you. You ask prosperity in undertakings, which, at the bottom, are, perhaps, criminal. Your request then is unlawful; because it becomes the justice of GOD, and his glory requires it, that your views should be disappointed. You ask, perhaps, the acquisition of an easy fortune: You ask the possession of such a woman for a wife: You ask a child or some other worldly gratification. But how do you know, whether the fortune, the wife, or the child you ask, may not wean your heart from GOD; fix your attachment more strongly on earthly happiness: and perhaps be the occasion of your final damnation;

damnation? Therefore *You ask and receive not, because you ask amiss.*

If then, beloved Christians, you desire to be refused nothing you ask, let your method be to ask nothing, but what is lawful and consistent with God's glory, and your eternal salvation. As long as you ask heavenly things, it is consistent with God's glory, and your good that he should grant them; and if you ask them Praying, that is, with the outward and inward dispositions, worthy of a truly Christian prayer, *believe that you shall receive, and they shall come unto you.* But whenever you ask what is unlawful or unfit, it becomes his immense wisdom and mercy to refuse it. And therefore *You will ask and receive not, because you ask amiss.* To be sure then, I say, beloved, of never being refused what you ask, ask the grace of God; ask your eternal salvation. These you are sure you may ask, and will receive; because Christ has promised; and therefore must and will grant them, in virtue of his divine promise. *Ask then the kingdom of Heaven, and all things else shall be added to you over and above,* that is to say, God's grace, and all the necessary and sufficient means consistent with and conducive to it.

"But what (you'll say perhaps) is it then unlawful to ask for temporal blessings?" No: I don't say it is; provided you always ask them with a due submission to God's blessed will, and only on condition of their being perfectly consistent with his honour and your sovereign good. I only say, that many things, you wish and petition for, are improper for you to receive; and therefore, if you ask them absolutely, you do not *ask praying.* And therefore *you ask and receive not, because you ask amiss.* But whatever lawful favour you ask in the submissive conditional manner, which becomes a Christian, can never hurt you; but may obtain you what you yearn after; and will, if it be good for you.

But then that even these prayers may have force, they must be accompanied with assiduity and perseverance. You are not to expect that your prayers are to be always granted as soon as offer'd. No, God often delays the favours he means not to refuse: Either because he takes delight in your conversing with him, or because he will put your constancy and fidelity to a trial. Thus did he do by the children of Israel, when besieged by *Holofernes*: And thus may he do by you, when beset by afflictions. Never then do you follow their example. Never presume to fix a time for his mercies. *What are you to tempt the Lord your God?* * No: Do not bind the counsels of the Lord: But wait for salvation of him, and call upon him. In a word, pray, implore, beseech and importune God, with patience,

* *Judith viii.*

till he hears you. This your divine Lord requires of you, and therefore tells you in the xviiith of St. Luke, that it *becometh always to pray, and not to be weary.* And the better to encourage you to constancy, adds two parables: One of the widow, who forced even an unjust judge by her importunities to render her justice: The other, in the xixth chapter, of a man, who gain'd, by importunity, the loan of the three loaves from his reluctant neighbour; And these our divine Master concludes with this gracious invitation to constancy, *I say to you: Ask and it shall be given you, seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be open'd to you.*

II. Such, beloved, are the conditions requisite to elevate your petitions to the dignity of prayers. Such are the prayers acceptable to your good God: And what is it such prayers cannot, will not obtain you from heaven, which is lawful for you to wish, or proper for you to ask? It was with such prayers as these, that *Isaac* obtain'd issue, after his wife had been many years barren; that the holy prophetess *Anna* was cured of her barrenness in an advanced age; that the holy prophet *Elias* obtain'd the blessing of a child for his unfruitful hostess. Such is the sovereign efficacy of prayer offer'd in this manner, that God suffers himself, in some sense, to be graciously forced by them. Thus the sick of a Leprosy, urged our divine Lord to work a miraculous cure on them: Thus did the Centurion solicit the re-establishment of his servant's health: And thus did the prince of the Synagogue, force Jesus to restore to him living, his deceased daughter: In a word, brethren, if you pray thus, with outward reverence, and with inward purity, attention, fervor and patience; what miracle is there which your prayers cannot, will not obtain? You may cure the most inveterate diseases: You may recall departed life: You may obtain the removal of mountains: Nay you may remove the most enormous iniquities from the breast of others or your own; force down the grace of God; work your own justification, and take heaven by violence. How else did the humble Publican, rid himself of the unwieldy weight of guilt he brought with him into the temple? What more did he than, with the disposition of senses, mind and heart, I have mention'd to you, utter that humble petition: *God, be merciful to me a sinner!* And accordingly, says our blessed Saviour, * *This man went down into his house justified.* † Such, dear Fellow-Christians, is the divine efficacy of true prayer. *He ask'd and received,* in-as-much as he *ask'd praying.*

You may see hence, beloved, that I am not against sinners saying their prayers; if they say them in the manner they ought. On the contrary: Sin-

* St. Luke xviii. † *Ibid.*

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ners stand in the greatest need of this sacred remedy against their miserable state. Nor indeed have they any other chance of rising from it, than by soliciting heaven for grace and mercy. But then what grace, what mercy, can a sinner expect from his offended God; when he presumes to pray to him, without first endeavouring to purify himself from the vices which offend him! Ah sinners! This is all which is required of you, to make your prayers as grateful in the eyes of GOD, as those of the most innocent of his saints. Hear then the ineffable gracious terms, which your GOD vouchsafes to make with you, by the mouth of his prophet *Isaiab*: * *Wash you, make you clean: Cease to do evil: Learn to do well; and though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow.* What say you, sinners? Can you have souls and refuse so gracious an invitation? It cannot be.

Apply then, beloved, apply earnestly to prayer. Sinners or saints, you see, you may render it of sovereign efficacy to you. Alas, alas! what innumerable blessings and graces have you hitherto lost for want of applying to it; at least as you ought! Enter then into yourselves, and think you hear your

* Chap. i.

blessed Redeemer kindly reproaching you, in the gracious words of my text: *Until now you have not ask'd any thing in my name. Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be full.* Ask for yourselves, says he, in my name; and be not dismay'd. *Ask and you shall receive. If you ask the Father any thing in my name; He will give it you.* Observe, my dear disciples. *I say not to you that I will ask the Father for you.* It is sufficient that I do it. *Holy Father keep them in thy name, whom thou hast given me; that they may be one, as we also are.* But why need I say so; when the Father is as ready to hear your prayers in my name, as I am myself. *For the Father himself loveth You, because You have loved me.* Ah Christians! What inducements more can you wish or want, to engage you to pray? The eternal Father loves you, and has sent his Son to receive your prayers: The Son loves you, and has offer'd himself your mediator: And both are desirous to communicate the grace of the Holy-Ghost to you. All they wait for is, that you should vouchsafe to ask what they court you to receive. Ask then, as my text invites you, *Ask and you shall receive, that your joy shall be full.* Which I beseech, &c. *In the Name, &c.*

S E R M O N

On the SUNDAY after the ASCENSION.

St. JOHN xv. 26.

When the COMFORTER cometh, whom I will send you from the Father; the spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father; He will give testimony of me: And you shall give testimony of me; because you are with me from the beginning.

OUR gracious Redeemer, beloved auditors, to console his disciples on their approaching loss of his visible presence on earth, promises them, in his stead, another person of the blessed Trinity, who shall be a Comforter to them, a safe-guard and a spirit of truth. This person then is the HOLY-GHOST, that Comforter, that divine spirit, whom Christ, after his glorious ascension, sent down on his Church; and who is always ready to enter into the hearts of such as worthily prepare for his coming. And to what end does this divine guest vouchsafe, to every-one of you, this ineffable visit; but that, coming into your souls, he may perpetu-

ally abide there, and give Testimony of Christ within you? But how shall the HOLY-GHOST give this Testimony, unless you yourselves join with him in it? He, then, this spirit of truth within you, must bear witness of Christ: And you must bear witness of him too. "Yes: You, O Christians! O Catholics! O members of Christ's mystical body! *You must give testimony of me, says Christ, because you are with me from the beginning.*" The only doubt is, in what manner this Testimony is to be given. But can this be a doubt with Catholics? You profess yourselves disciples, and the only true disciples of Christ: Do you not? And how are you, as his disciples, to give Testimony of him; if not by treading in his steps, and making the lively faith and hope you have in him, appear in the good works you do after him? Catholics then are of all people, under an indispensable obligation of not only being good in themselves; but even of inducing others to be so, by their example. To make this truth:

truth therefore familiar to you, I shall consider separately;

- I. The great duty and advantages which should urge Catholics to give Testimony of Christ, in the sanctity of an edifying life; and
- II. The danger and dreadful consequences of their giving Testimony against him, by the scandal of an irregular conduct.

“O thou, dear Saviour! Hear our sighs; fulfill thy gracious word, and be our Saviour still. Send down thy blessed spirit to instruct, to comfort, and revive us with his grace; that, full of him, and full of thee, we may reflect thy holy life in ours, and thus bear witness of thee.”

I. That Catholics are strictly bound to lead unblemish'd lives, there need no arguments to prove. The claim they lay to being Christ's disciples, his best, his eldest, only true disciples, lays them under the strictest obligation of sanctity in their private conversation. The pains our heavenly Master took to instruct his beloved followers in virtue and true wisdom, not more by precept than example, had been to very little purpose; if, after all, these had not been bound to practice the same after him. Accordingly he tells them; * *I have given you an example, that as I have done, so you also may do.* In vain then, O Catholics, are you disciples of Christ; if you copy not that holiness which he has set you so lively an example of in his own blessed person.

Infidels, heretics, schismatics, may alledge some excuse for the irregularity of their lives. They are not with Christ *from the beginning*: They know him not, or know him but imperfectly: And therefore no wonder is it, that they follow not his example and precepts, or follow but by halves. Yet this excuse will not suffice to screen them from God's justice; tho' it may temper the severity of his judgment. Because, if they do not know Christ so well as you, they might have known him better than they do. And in that lies their guilt: And for that shall they be punish'd. *He, who knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few,* says our divine Saviour. † And why should he be beaten at all, but because he might have known? but still, as he actually does not know, his punishment shall be abated, and his stripes shall be few. O what infinit mercy, my God, do'st thou not make appear in the very midst of thy justice!

But how can you, O Catholics, hope to screen yourselves from the utmost rigour of his justice; if you venture to abuse the communication of his goodness: You are members of a holy Church, *which is with Christ from the beginning*: You

* St. John xiii.

† St. Luke xi.

know his will, and are perfectly grounded in his doctrines: You have not only the grace of baptism to lift you above infidels, but numberless advantages above many, who lay claim to that initial mercy in common with you. What pains are not taken to instruct you in your catechism? What frequent instructions do you not receive from your directors; from preachers; from devout books; from the virtuous example, and improving conversation of the pious? What comforts? What recruits of strength? What graces? And what inspirations have you not the opportunity of frequently receiving from the holy sacraments? And if you abuse, or neglect, these advantages; what can you expect, but that you should be punish'd by the divine Justice with inexpressibly greater severity than those unhappy wretches who are without these helps? O remember then, that, *That servant, who knows the will of his Lord, and prepares not himself, and does not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes!* * And what, beloved Christians, can be more perfectly consistent with God's equitable mercy than that, from you, *to whom much is given, much shall be required?* †

Again you, of all people, beloved, have the greatest interest to be watchful over your conduct; that your lives may be of a piece with his, whose holy faith you profess. For ah! what is it you do not suffer here on earth for that faith? Are you not reviled, ill-treated, notoriously belied, and set at naught by people of every profession? Are you not loaded with taxes; strip of defence; shut-out from every privilege you have, by birth, a right to enjoy in your own native land? And are you not (tho' Heaven can witness how unjustly) treated by men of all denominations, as enemies to your dear deluded country? Nay (what is more) as enemies to God, the very God for the honour of whose name you suffer? Still these things are no more than you have had reason to expect; because forewarn'd of them. *For these things I have spoken to you,* says Jesus, *that when the hour shall come, you may remember that I told you.* That is, Beloved, that you may remember your divine Saviour, remember to suffer for him manfully, and remember to sanctify your sufferings for him, by being like him. For alas, O God of our salvation! How sadly wretched must not our condition be; should we suffer here, for professing thy holy faith, and yet suffer eternally hereafter for disgracing that holy faith, with unsanctified lives! And yet, Catholics, it is not barely professing Christ, tho' you should seal that profession with your blood, which will make good Catholics of you. *For he, who is Christ's, must walk just as he walk'd,* as St. John says: ‡ Otherwise he is a

* St. Luke xii. † St. John ii. ‡ St. John xvi.

disgrace,

disgrace, and not an honour to his blessed Master. And therefore, whatever repulses a Catholic may meet with from Men, for calling himself a true disciple of his heavenly Lord; his last, his worst repulse will be, when Christ shall publicly refuse to own him such, for want of that true likeness to himself, which Christians ought to have. O dire illusion of the loose-living Catholic, who dies with delusive thoughts of persecutions suffer'd, and fraught with groundless hopes of future recompence! O think, dear fellow sufferers! When he appears before the throne of GOD; how dreadful must not his unexpected equitable disappointment be, to hear his awful angry judge, with stern serenity pronounce the sad irrevocable sentence: *I know you not; Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire!* *

Ah! Christians! Does the sentence fright you? Avoid it then. There is a milder, sweeter, more transporting, sentence: *Come ye, blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:* † And this may be your own, if you but please. To merit it then, be what you profess yourselves, your Saviour's true disciples: *Learn from him; for he is meek and humble of heart:* † Put on his holiness of life, and be like him: Be sober, chaste, patient in adversity, bounteous in prosperity, just and charitable: Be clean of heart: Be poor in spirit; and let your virtues so abound, that, when he comes to separate the virtuous from the wicked, he may confess his likeness in you, own you for his disciples, and crown you with that never-ending glory which he made for you.

But to be sure of this, beware, beloved, that you depart not hence with half your errand. 'Tis not enough, that you be good yourselves, unless you labour to make others so by your example. *Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick; that it may shine to all, who are in the house. So let your light shine before men; that they may see your good-works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven, and glorify his Son whom you profess to follow upon earth.* To what other purpose is the HOLY-GHOST sent to you, but thus to give Testimony of Christ within you? And how shall the HOLY-GHOST give Testimony of your Master in and through you; unless you cultivate his grace in the good-works he inspires you to do? Without this in vain are you Christ's disciples. *A son honoureth his father, says the prophet Malacby, § and a servant honoureth his master: If then Christ be your Father; where is his honour? If he is your Lord; where is his fear; unless, by your example, you induce others to honour and fear him as you fear him yourselves; in a word, unless you give testimony of him: You, who are Catholics: You,*

* S. Mat. xxv. † Ibid. † St. Mat. xi. § Chap. i.

who are consequently with him from the beginning?

That you take care to be good in yourselves, you do well for your own sakes: But where is your charity to your neighbours, or what benefit shall they reap from your virtue and innocence; if you render these useless by stifling them? *Be then examples of the faithful, says St. Paul * in word, in conversation, in charity, in faith, in chastity that your profiting may be manifest to all. For doing this, you shall save both yourselves and them who bear you.* Yes you will save yourselves, and will be the happy instruments of salvation to others, when, persuading them to follow Christ, they see your actions of a piece with your words. When you exhort those, who do follow Christ, to follow him on, or when you invite those to seek him, who as yet do not know him: the sanctity of an edifying life, which they observe in you, shall add resistless persuasion to your words, and so shall you not only save your own souls but those of your neighbours: So shall you, in a word, do honour to the Lord you profess and suffer for, by giving Testimony of him. And that gracious Lord has promised, that *every one, who shall own him before men, he-himself will own before his Father who is in heaven.* †

II. But ah, Christians! Remember too that terrifying menace which he adds against those who do the contrary: *That is, those, who deny him before men, or (what is the same) those who give Testimony against him to men: He who shall deny me before men, I will also deny him before my Father who is in Heaven.* † And what else, beloved, can you be said to do; if your lives are the reverse of his, irregular and full of offence to weak brethren, or affording scandal to those without? However publicly then you may profess Christ; however you may suffer for professing yourselves Catholic Christians; you still deny him, if your actions are not answerable to your profession. You may say, if you please, that you believe in Christ, but who will believe you? *He, who say'th that he knoweth Christ and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.* §

Do you tell me, beloved, you are Catholics? I cannot believe you, unless you prove yourselves such by shewing me a nearer likeness between you and Christ. What opinion can I have of your Catholicity, if it is not powerful enough to make you lead better lives than those do, who are not Catholics? What encouragement do I receive, or rather what discouragement do I not receive from you, to be a Catholic myself; if I see you, who are Catholics, suffer in this world, for being such, and likely to suffer more in the next, for being no better lives than others who are not such?

* 1 Tim. iv. † St. Mat. x. † St. Mat. x. § 1 St. John ii.

Ah

Ah brethren! Be serious then, and reflect on the dangerous consequences flowing from every the least irregularity in your conduct: And avoid them. Nay however convinced you may be, that the thing you wish to do, is right in itself; if it be not an essential duty, omit it rather than give offence to a weak brother, who shall think otherwise. *Through your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died. Alas! Sinning thus against the brethren, and striking their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.* * And can you do this, and call yourselves Christians? Can you pretend thus to walk by his light? No, no: you deceive yourselves. *He who say'th he is in the light, and hateth his brother, says St. John, † is in darkness, even until now. He, who loveth his brother, He only, abideth in the light and scandal is not in him.* And truly, brethren, how can loving a brother and scandalizing a brother, agree together? As often then as you thus act in opposition to Christ; as often as any action of yours give scandal to a weak brother, so often are you in darkness, so often do you bear testimony against your Saviour: So often are you of the number of those who *confess that they know God, but in their works they deny him; whereas they are abominable, and to every good-work reprobate.* ‡

If such be the dangerous consequences of giving offence to weak brethren among the faithful: Ah! think, dearest fellow Christians, how much more abominable in the sight of Christ must you not appear, should any of your actions give a just reason of scandal to those, who are out of the pales of his Church? Besides the detriment you do to your own souls, what danger do you not incur of widening many unhappy wretches, who are witnesses to your irregular conduct, still more from the faith of Christ, and strengthening their prejudices against his Church? Nay more, what derision and scandal do you not bring upon the holy Church which you disgrace, by professing yourselves members of it? All which must necessarily aggravate your guilt, and therefore redouble the severity of your punishment. Hence it is that St. Paul tells the *Thessalonian* Christians, that it is not enough for them to behave charitably and justly towards one another, but their Christianity must carry them farther: They must do the same towards the worst of infidels. *We desire you, brethren, that you abound more: ... And that you, must walk honestly towards them, who are without.* §

Thus also, after the divine St. Paul, I say to you, beloved: It is not enough that you be just and charitable to one-another, to Catholics: No. *You must abound more:* You must be equally so to heretics, to heathens, to atheists themselves: You must be

* 1 Cor. viii. † 1 St. John ii. ‡ Titus i.
§ 1 Thessalonians iv.

charitable to the worst of men, and just to the most iniquitous: Faithful or unfaithful, all have a claim to your honesty and bounty. In a word, you must *walk honestly towards those who are without.* You are falsely accused of keeping no faith, nay allowing no faith to be kept, with those who join not in communion with you. And would you not be highly criminal, should you give room to your enemies to confirm their calumny against the Church: You, who are members of it? Ought you not rather, in your actions, to give the lie to their revilings, by paying fraud with honesty, retaliating violence with meekness, and inwardly practising the justice and charity which your holy mother the Church teaches you to pay to all men, without exception of Catholics, heretics or infidels?

Ah! Do it then, beloved Christians, and shew yourselves such. Let your lives be such pictures of that of Christ, that none, who are once witnesses to the things you practice, may need to ask what religion you profess. Be mindful of your dignity, and keep up to it. Be mindful of the manifold favours you have received from Heaven; and, to the best of your capacity, be grateful in the use of them. Be mindful, as St. Peter * says, that you *are a holy nation, a people of purchase; that you may declare his virtues, who hath call'd you to this marvelous Light.* Finally dear brethren, be mindful of the great obligation you are under of giving Testimony of Christ in the sanctity of an edifying life; and let the advantages you will reap from so doing, encourage you to it, as the dangers and dreadful consequences of doing otherwise, ought to deter you from giving Testimony against him. In the words therefore of the same apostle, let me beseech you, brethren, as strangers and pilgrims, to *restrain yourselves from carnal desires which war against the soul.* † Do this for your own sakes: And, for the sake of Christ, and those precious souls he died for, *have your conversation good among those who are not Catholics; that, in what they misreport of you as of evil-doers, considering you by your good-works, they may glorify God in the day of visitation.* ‡ that is, in the day, when it shall please God to visit them with the light of his grace to see their mistake. Know, beloved, that it is your duty to do and suffer for and after Christ with fidelity and constancy. *For so is the will of God, that doing well, you may make the ignorance of unwise men dumb.* § Then will you render yourselves worthy of the Comforter's approach. And when the Comforter cometh, as my text assures you, *He will give testimony of Christ: And you shall give testimony of him: Because you are with him from the beginning.* And your reward shall be, to be with him to the END,

* 1 St. Peter ii. † 1 St. Peter ii. ‡ Ibid.
§ Ibid.

and give endless Testimony of him before his Father in Heaven: Who will crown you with un-

speakable joy for all eternity. Which, &c. In the Name, &c.

S E R M O N

On the PENTECOST or WHIT-SUNDAY.

St. JOHN, xiv. 23.

If any-one love me; he will keep my word and my Father will love him: And we will come to him and will make abode with him.

ON this sacred day, dear Christian auditors, our holy Mother the Church commemorates the great and universal blessing pour'd down upon her in the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles. And in this annual repetition of thanksgiving to her heavenly Spouse for sending the sacred Comforter to her, her purpose is, not only to express her gratitude to God for the invaluable benefaction, but likewise to excite us, her children, to imitate those glorious founders of Christianity by (this day) disposing ourselves for receiving, as they did, the ineffable communications of the same divine Spirit, in a more singular ample manner than at other times of the year. And to induce us to set about this important work the more earnestly. She shews us, how much it is our interest; by reminding us that all we have of God must come from him. Therefore does she devoutly address him in the Sequence of the Mass with that humble apostrophe: *Without thy light, nothing is in man but what is pernicious.* For our farther encouragement, she proposes to us the passage of the Gospel which I have just read to you: That we may see, in one point of view, the easiness of the task she proposes to us, and the greatness of the reward. All then, which is demanded of us, is the practical love of Jesus, that is, the faithful, steady observance of his doctrines for pure love of himself: *If any-one love me, he will keep my word.* The recompence for doing which is nothing less than the possession of the Holy Ghost, the love of Jesus and his Father: *And my Father will love him: And we will come to him and make abode with him.* O, the easy task to love the lovely Jesus! Must we not be monsters to find a difficulty in loving him, who has first loved us, and proved his love by such stupendous methods? O the ineffable reward, to have our finite, faint affection recompensed with a bound-

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less ocean of prodigious love; with the possession of the Holy Ghost, the love of God, the God of Love! O amorous Jesus! What delicacy of tender love was this of thine, to send us, in thy stead, a Comforter so like thyself, that, receiving him, we might possess even Thee; and, almost transform'd ourselves to something of divine, our hearts might contain a whole flaming paradise of ardent love? But it is not now a time, beloved, to give my own affections all their scope; when I must try to fuel yours, by suitable instruction. To do this then, beloved, I shall briefly shew you;

- I. What are the chief benefits accruing to a soul which receives the Holy Ghost into it:
- II. What are the essentials requisite to render a soul capable of receiving the Holy Ghost: *And,*
- III. What are the most effectual means of attracting the Holy Ghost into a soul already qualified to receive him.

“Come then, O Spirit Divine, and light upon us all; replenish our intellects with perfect knowledge of Thee; and kindle in our hearts the unconsuming fire of thy love.”

I. Before we can come to any familiar solution of these points, we must necessarily clear-up one previous question which may occur; to wit, What is here meant by receiving the Holy Ghost. There are then two ways of receiving this divine Comforter: The one by *justifying grace*: The other by *perfecting love*. *Justifying grace* consists in an absolute freedom from all mortal sin and every actual affection to it; and is a state of habitual charity with God and man, arising from baptismal innocence or sacramental penance, either in act or purpose with contition. But *perfecting love* presupposes that and is a more ample participation of the Divine Lights and Favours, whereby we are raised to a unitive intimacy with God, and establish'd in such an eminence of solid sanctity as mere justifying

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ing grace seldom or never can attain to. Now from this distinction it is self-evident, that the reception of the Holy Ghost, which Christians ought in a special manner to prepare themselves for at this holy time, cannot be understood to consist in a mere *justifying grace*: For, this every Christian, who has his salvation ever so little at heart, must be at all times possess of. What is meant then, in this discourse, by the reception of the Holy Ghost, is the reception of *perfecting grace*, or, in other words, the reception of a certain *sanctifying habit*, which may lift us above the habitual affections and inclinations of nature to sin and sinful objects, and may strengthen in us the love of God and the contempt of the world. This is what St. Paul means, when he exhorts us to *emulate the better gifts*.^{*} This, properly speaking, is the plenitude of every good gift and every perfect present from above, descending from the Father of lights.† And this, in the strictest sense, may be call'd the reception of the Holy Ghost. Since on one hand, without the special influence of his divine presence in the soul, it is impossible we should enjoy the blessed habit of *sanctifying grace*; and, on the other hand, once we are possess of that habit, the consoling effects which flow from it to the soul are too sensible to leave us any room to doubt of it's being in full possession of that Divine Spirit.

Many and ineffable are the gifts and fruits accompanying this special presence of the sacred Comforter in the soul of a devout Christian: Which, however, it is needless for me either to enumerate or explain; since you may find it already done in every catechism. The only ones then which I mean to take notice of, are those which the soul is generally the most sensible of even in the flesh: And these are--A perfect tranquillity of conscience; an intimate union of heart with God, and an habitual elevation of the mind to heavenly things.

In fact, What can give a greater serenity to the conscience than the being not only free from guilt, but even sensible of it's freedom, as it actually must be whenever, and as long as this divine guest remains within the soul and continues to shed there the influences of his *perfecting grace*. For, as this sanctifying quality is inseparable from the love of God, it not only forwards us in the progress of charity, but makes us sensible of the sweet effects of it; and therefore not only releases us from the bands of guilt, but even animates us with a pleasing consciousness of our spiritual freedom, banishing that fear and dismay which are inherent in sin and sinful affections. *Fear is not in charity*, says St. John,‡ but perfect charity casteth out fear; because fear hath pain. And he, who feareth, is not in perfect charity. The heart then which pos-

sesses the Holy Ghost in the grace of *perfecting* charity, is not susceptible of those terrors of conscience which wait upon guilt; but is replenish'd with such a lively hope in the God who comforts it, as is more than sufficient to render it serene and immoveable amidst every temptation. And what greater consolation can it wish for than the being sensible, as it is, of having always nigh at hand, and within call, nay, of actually possessing, a powerful friend, a generous guest, and a fond protector; who not only professes and is able to assist it on every emergency, but actually does assist it, and is eager after every occasion of affording it his effectual aid? What adverse power can disturb the tranquillity of the soul, which is once arrived to the beatitude of being associated with this divine Spirit, whose delight it is to be father to the poor, comforter of the afflicted, and help of the distressed? And all this the Holy Ghost is to such as give him a worthy reception into their hearts.

St. Paul tells us, in his epistle to the Romans,† that such and so intimate is the union of this divine Person with the soul of a Christian who devoutly receives him in the grace of *perfecting* love; that the blessed effects of it are diffused throughout, and, as it were, intermix'd with the very sentiments of the soul; *the charity of God*, says he, *is diffused in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us*. And it is probably from this figurative expression of our apostle, that St. John Chrysostom takes occasion to say, that "the man, who once happily attains to such a blessed union with the divine Comforter, can no more be sensible of spiritual thirst and barrenness of consolation, than a person could be imagin'd to be capable of drought, who should have a well-spring within him." If then the apostle and holy father are worthy of credit, as surely they are; since nothing in nature more intimately intermixes with the natural juices of man than the liquids he imbibes; so nothing created can admit of a more intimate union than that of the Holy Ghost, with a soul which happily attains to the blessing of sanctifying grace.

And what a supernatural elevation of mind will not such a union be able to raise the soul to! What ample discoveries of spiritual wisdom must not ensue! What sacred salutary truths before unknown! The Holy Ghost, says JESUS, will teach you in that hour: And what heavenly knowledges becoming you to have, can escape your spiritual penetration under the tuition of such a master? By the help of his light, you may, you will, you must be able to see the fallacies of the world, and even, as St. Paul says, to penetrate into the profoundest mysteries of God's sacred truths. Nor need the soul, in such an enviable circumstance, be daunted or retarded from the study of celestial wisdom by any earthly

^{*} 1 Cor. xii.

† St. James i.

‡ 1 St. John iv.

† *Ibid*, chap. v.

difficulties or delays. No: as venerable *Bede* observes, "The soul soon becomes an apt scholar where God is the instructor; and, that which the Almighty teaches is quickly learnt." And how, indeed, should it be otherwise; when our divine teacher is the very light we see by, as well as the substance of all which we can see, or which is worth our seeing? Such then are the blessed advantages accruing to christian souls from a worthy reception of the Comforter by means of perfecting grace. The next question must be—Who are the persons capable of receiving the Holy Ghost in this ineffable manner?

II. All mankind were created, and originally design'd, to be capable of receiving him into their souls. And yet the blessed privilege of receiving him is confer'd on far the smallest part of men; because much the greater number, through their own perversity, render themselves disqualified for this unspeakable blessing, by neglecting to provide themselves with the essentials indispensably required. Now, these are:—That they be Christians,—That they keep within the pale of Christ's Holy Catholic Church,—and that they persevere in a state of justifying grace.

Before St. *Peter* would consent, and, indeed, before he could have authority to admit the multitudes to partake of the Holy Ghost in common with him and the rest of the apostles; one important condition was previously and indispensably necessary, namely, that they should be baptized and profess the name of JESUS CHRIST. And, accordingly the apostle requires it of them, before he will attempt to exert the power of his apostolic commission in communicating the divine Comforter to them. *Let every-one of you be baptized in the name of JESUS CHRIST unto the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the Holy Ghost.* * In reality, without this condition it was impossible they should receive the perfecting charity which is necessary to link the soul in an intimate union with the divine Spirit. "For, says the venerable St. *Gregory*, Charity does not precede faith; but faith precedes charity: No man can love, or fix his hopes upon, what he does not believe in." Nor does it at all weaken this truth, that the grace of the Holy Ghost was pour'd-out upon the Gentils, at the sermon of St. *Peter*, ere they were baptized with water, † for though the baptism of water, where it may be had, is absolutely necessary to salvation; yet, till it can be applied, the baptism of desire, accompanied with a lively faith in JESUS CHRIST, and a steady disposition and purpose to be baptized with water as soon as possible, will suffice to make a soul a Christian, and consequently to

* *Act* ii. † *Act* xi.

make it a fit subject for the reception of the Holy Ghost. This was the case with those Gentils; and therefore, though they had not yet been regenerated with water, there was no obstacle to hinder their being first baptized with the Holy Ghost and with the fire of perfecting charity, till opportunity should serve for their being re-born with water also. Nevertheless, this baptism of desire, though sufficient to make Christians of them, and to anticipate the ampler communications of the Holy Ghost in their souls, was not sufficient to take away their obligation to be baptized with water, when opportunity should serve: But, on the contrary, strengthen'd that obligation, in-as-much as it necessarily included a purpose of it. And thus much is all which St. *Peter* means, when, commanding these new-inflamed Christians to be baptized with water in the name of our Lord JESUS CHRIST, he says: *Can any man forbid water; that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?* * It is plain therefore, that those Gentils, tho' not baptized with water, were really and truly Christians, in that they believed in JESUS CHRIST, and were desirous to be baptized in his name. For, had they not believed in Christ, the Holy Ghost, instead of visiting them with his gifts, must have pursued them with his chastisements and convicted them of sin for their disbelief, according to the promise of Christ to his apostles. † And farther, had not their faith in Christ produced in them the desire of being baptized unto remission of sins through him; the apostle could not have answer'd exposing Christ's holy name and sacrament to contempt and abuse, by forcing them upon such as were not disposed to receive them. Whence it is very evident, that, for any to possess the Holy Ghost with his perfecting gifts, it is a matter of indispensable necessity, that they be Christians.

Not that you are therefore to imagin, that the barely being Christians will suffice to qualify you for the sanctifying presence of this divine Comforter. No: You must not only be Christians but true ones: You must be orthodox Christians: You must live within the pale of Christ's catholic church. All Christians who are out of that pale, are so by heresy, schism, or excommunication; which are occasion'd by enormous pride, arrogance and disobedience to the doctrines and precepts of Christ's mystical spouse. Such, therefore, must consequently be incapable of the reception of the Holy Ghost, who resists the proud, and gives grace only to the humble. ‡ It must be beneath the dignity of the Holy Ghost, who is God of justice and love, to communicate himself to the unjust or uncharitable: And they who disbelieve or disobey the Church,

* *Ibid.* † 1 *S.* John xvi. ‡ *Prov.* iii. St. *James* iv. 1 *S.* *Peter* v.

are both. In short, as *St. Augustin* observes, "Where sound faith is absent, justice cannot be present: For the just man lives by faith. † And where justice is not, charity cannot be; because *charity worketh no evil.* ‡ Wherefore, if heretics, schismatics and excommunicated persons were not void of all justice and charity, they would not, as they do, through their pride and rebellion, lacerate the Catholic Church, the mystic body of *JESUS.*" Such then, surely, can have no reasonable hope of receiving the Holy Ghost with his sanctifying gifts; while they obstinately keep themselves at a distance from his graces and lights, by perversely remaining on the wrong side of the pale, within which alone he sheds his benign influence, according to those remarkable words of *St. Athanasius's* Creed: "Whoever will be saved, he must first and before all things hold the Catholic Faith. Which, if any-one keep not intire and inviolate; without doubt, he shall eternally perish."

And full as vain are the hopes of such Catholics as, trusting to their being members of Christ's holy Church, suffer themselves to be deprived of all the advantages of being so, by living in a state of mortal sin. For, alas, what can we compare the souls of such wretched Catholics to, but to the putrified limb of a physical body; which, though it be not cut off, is dead to all the functions of life, and therefore incapable of sharing, in common with the rest, any of the beneficent influences communicated to them, from the head or the heart, by the kindly circulation of the blood and juices? To enjoy then the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost, even within the pales of the Church; to obtain the gifts of this divine Comforter, and to reap the blessed fruits of his perfecting presence in the soul, it must first absolutely be in a state of justifying grace, a state of saving charity with *GOD* and man. Without charity we are nothing, we can nothing, we have nothing to entitle us to the communication of *GOD's* goodness; we cannot be members of Christ; or, at best, are but dead and odious ones. "No-one therefore, says *St. Augustin*, can without arrogance pretend to be renew'd in the mystic body of Christ, till he is perfectly recover'd from the corruption of deadly sin." Presume not then, Christians to complain that *GOD* neglects you: Nor foolishly conceit, that his power is shorten'd from what it was, in that you receive not the like graces as the primitive Christians did: But rather conclude that your fervor, faith and charity, are infinitely short of theirs. Think on the answer of *Isaiab* to the *Israelites*, which is so applicable to yourselves: "If *GOD* the Holy Ghost is sparing of his gifts and graces to you, more than he was

† *Konans* i.‡ *1 Cor.* xiii.

"to the Christians of old; *It is not that the power of GOD is abridged, or that he cannot save you.*" No: Your iniquities and evil life are the cause, why *GOD* hides his face from you and will not bear you."

If then you would have him turn again to you; if you desire his holy presence in your hearts, qualify yourselves for the reception of him: Believe in *JESUS CHRIST* with unshaken faith; submit to the doctrine and precepts of his holy Catholic Church with chearful obedience; and prove yourselves worthy children of that Church by persevering in a state of justifying grace.

III. Thus much, beloved auditors, is essentially requisite to render you at all susceptible of any of the graces of the Holy-Ghost: And thus much will absolutely suffice, barely to save you: But it is far from being sufficient to sanctify you in this life. If you mean to reach to any degree of perfection on this side of the grave; if you covet any superior favours from heaven; if you wish to receive the divine *Paraclete* in the same singular and ineffable manner, as the apostles did on that sacred *Pentecost*, which the Church, this day commemorates; you must go farther: You must apply the effectual means to invite him into your hearts. Such then are --- *First*, a filial confidence in his infinite goodness; --- *Secondly*, an unwearied industry in supererogatory good-works; --- and *Thirdly*, an indefatigable constancy in soliciting the encrease of his graces.

The Holy-Ghost himself assures us, by the mouth of the wisest of men, that they who place a proper confidence in him, shall come to the perfect knowledge of his sacred truths, and enjoy their fill of consolation in him: *They, who put their trust in GOD, shall understand truth; and faithful in love, shall find their repose in it.* * And how should it be otherwise, when, as *St. John* assures us, this divine Comforter himself is promised as the sovereign recompence of Christian hope? *he, who believeth in Me*, says Christ, † (that is, in the proper sense of this passage, *He, who confideth in me*) *as the scripture sayth, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.* And this he said, adds the Evangelist, of the spirit which they should receive, who believed in him, that is, who confided in him. For as yet the spirit was not given; because *JESUS* was not yet glorified ‡ by his Father, nor honour'd with lively confidence by his disciples. Nothing is more capable of exciting even human beings to beneficence than a confidence reposed in them, much more then shall a lively hope in *GOD* excite the divine *Paraclete*, to shewer down his graces with profusion upon such as stand in need of them. For---whence, I beseech

* *Wisdom* iii.† *1 St. John* vii.‡ *Ibid.* you,

you, does reptil man derive the generous sentiments, he imbibes, but from that fountain of all generosity? Ah! Well then may St. *Augustin* tell us, that "He, who is joyful in confidence, shall be rich in the matter of his hopes."

The holy father however, can only mean this of a reasonable confidence: Such a one as is built on the steady pursuit of meritorious actions and supererogatory good-works. For St. *Paul* assures us, and not without reason, that *they who sow sparingly, shall sparingly reap* * And indeed they only, who prove their practical love for Christ by the observance of his precepts and counsels, are promised the recompence of his and the eternal Father's love, the HOLY-GHOST. *If any-one loves me*, says Christ; *He will keep my word, and my Father will love him: And we will come to him, and will make abode with him.* It is then our own extraordinary love for Christ, which must obtain us the extraordinary graces of the HOLY-GHOST, who is his love; and it is upon our own assiduity in the practice of superabundant works of mercy towards others and self-denial towards ourselves, that we must build the proofs of our love for God. For *they, who love Christ* ardently, will be ardent to keep his word, whether he command or only counsel. In short, they will study to be perfect, even as their heavenly Father also is perfect. † "It is quite vain therefore," says St. *Jerom*, to expect any advantage "from other men's works. No, every-one shall receive his reward according, and in proportion to his own industry." If then, O dear-loved brethren, you wish to receive a greater share of "grace and favours from the HOLY-GHOST, than the generality of Christians do; excell them in meritorious actions. Be not content with barely doing what your Saviour commands; but aspire above mere obligation, and do the meritorious works to which he counsels you! In a word, *emulate the better gifts*, and sow as plentifully as you wish to mete. For *he, who sows in blessings, of blessings shall reap*: ‡

That is, provided you are equally diligent in soliciting them with fervent prayer. He, who may have for asking and neglects to ask, may be said to refuse. If then you neglect to solicit the Divine Favours, which are offer'd to your prayers; can you imagin the Holy Ghost will force them on you? No, Christians. He is ready to yield himself up to your prayers: But, then he expects that you should first invite him by prayer. Ah! Pray then, and pray earnestly. If you are repulsed, pray again. Solicit the divine favours again and again,

* 2 Cor. ix. † St. *Matth.* v. ‡ 1 Cor. ix.

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still importunity obtains your request. Remember the encouragement you have from scripture and experience. Recollect the instance of the man whose importunity obtain'd the loaves, which he had otherwise gone without. Copy after the widow, who, by unwearied solliciting, procured justice even of an evil judge who was little disposed to render it. *Elisba* had never received the double spirit of *Elias*; if he had not persevered to the last in solliciting it: The apostles would not have been replenish'd with the Holy Ghost; if they had not persisted in suing for his coming: And you must never expect the like blessing, without a like perseverance.

They were fervent in prayer: They pray'd in society: And, without suffering themselves to be deluded by the human improbability of obtaining their pious wish; by the delay of their hopes; or, by any other obstacles; they still persevered in piety and prayer. And what was their recompence? Why says the sacred historian, * *When the days of Pentecost were accomplish'd, they were all together in one place; And suddenly there was made a sound from heaven, as of a vehement wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appear'd to them parted tongues, as it were of fire, and sat upon every-one of them. And they were all replenish'd with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak.* O the blessed premium of a little confidence in God, a little industry in good-works, a little fervor and constancy in prayer! Ah! Christians, you see the glorious goal before you. Courage then: Begin the race; and so run that you may obtain. † Who knows, by copying the example of those heroic founders of Christianity, what graces you may deserve from Heaven? Who knows, what external marks of favour you may be honour'd with by the Holy Ghost? Who can pretend with certainty to say, that, in such case, there shall not be reason to record of this very christian flock, that, *persevering with one mind in prayer*, the Holy Ghost with visible proofs of his all-powerful grace, descended on all here present. At least, if he give you not to speak in different tongues; he may inflame you with such blessed fruits and gifts of love as shall be one day changed into, what only can surpass them, his eternal glory. O Spirit Divine! Celestial Light! O Holy Ghost! O Love of God! O God of Love! Inflame these frozen breasts of ours; enliven these bloodless hearts, and change our earthly affections into heavenly ones. Teach us neither to seek nor wish for aught beside thyself: And let thy presence

* *Act.* ii. † 1 Cor. ix.

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fill us to satiety. O never let our memory forget thy pleasure, or forget to do it. Banish from our minds all error and illusion; and warmly move our wills to practice constantly those virtues which may

bring us soonest and nearest to Thee. Come then, all-gracious Comforter, make thy abode with us, and link us inseparably to thyself forever. I beseech, &c. *In the name, &c.*

END of the FIRST VOLUME.

7 AP 53

